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Understanding Creative Partnerships: An examination of policy and practice

Sophie Claire Ward

Abstract

Creative Partnerships was launched in 2002 as an arts-based education programme that aimed to transform the aspirations of young people living in socially and economically deprived areas of England. The organisation was established in response to the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999), which offered an account of creativity as a means to foster individual self-reliance and social unity. This thesis explores how the NACCCE's construction of creativity enabled New Labour to appear to endorse the value of the arts in education whilst promoting the model of the self as an autonomous economic unit, and considers how Creative Partnerships was paradoxically welcomed by supporters of the arts in education who were displeased with the instrumentalism at work in much of New Labour's education policy. The aim of this thesis is to understand Creative Partnerships by examining the discourse that constitutes the programme, and by offering an empirical enquiry into a project that took place within a secondary school in the north of England. In so doing, this thesis critically evaluates the political motivation for the use of arts-based education as a means to develop self-reliance, and considers how successive governments have imported the free market economic model into education to promote efficiency, and the role that Creative Partnerships might be said to play in the maximisation of the total social system. Finally, this thesis considers the current limitations of Creative Partnerships, and how arts-based education might be used to develop social cohesion.

Understanding Creative Partnerships: An examination of policy and practice

Sophie Claire Ward

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

School of Education

Durham University

October 2010

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For Sam

Introduction

Creative Partnerships was launched by Tessa Jowell, Culture Secretary, at the conference on Arts and Young Offenders held in the Tate Modern in 2002. In her speech, Jowell presented Creative Partnerships as an arts-based education programme targeted at primary and secondary pupils living in areas of England blighted by ‘social and cultural deprivation’, and she foregrounded the value of the arts in addressing social problems, claiming that ‘music workshops, Shakespeare performances and dance classes can give young people an alternative to burglary, vandalism and violence’ (Jowell, 2002; see Appendix B). Developed and managed by the Arts Council England, and sponsored by the DCMS and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the £40m Creative Partnerships pilot programme ran from 2002-4, and involved 250,000 pupils, teachers, parents and community members within 16 of England’s most deprived areas (Clancy, 2002). Estelle Morris, Education Secretary at the time of Creative Partnership’s launch, describes the special place that the programme held in New Labour’s political vision:

The Creative Partnerships programme is key to the government’s overall aim of giving everyone the chance to play an active part in the society we create, checked only by the limits of their talent and ambition. We need to value creativity – we know it can transform young people’s aspirations. Some may go on to make their living from culture, utilising their vision, talent and understanding of creative processes to seek new ways of problem solving. Others will go on to work in other fields: manufacturing, teaching, engineering, medicine and politics. Whatever they choose to do, they will need to be creative and innovative. (Morris, 2003)

The strength of New Labour’s faith in the transformative properties of the arts and creativity was made evident by its decision to invest a further £70m in Creative Partnerships during 2004-6, a decision which was announced before the end of the pilot programme (Morris, 2003). In spite of the government’s firm endorsement of creativity, when the Arts Council England commissioned a survey of the core concept of creativity operating within Creative Partnerships, the ensuing report, *The rhetorics of creativity* (Banaji *et al*, 2006) identified nine different, and contradictory, ‘rhetorics’ of creativity that emerged from the context of academia, policy and practice. Although Banaji *et al* (2006) explained that these rhetorics, or

claims, about creativity had developed independently of one another, with some dating back to antiquity and others emerging more recently in response to developments in areas such as computer technology, they did not explain how or why such diverse claims about the nature and value of creativity came to be embodied, simultaneously, in Creative Partnerships. The remarks made by Jowell and Morris indicate that New Labour viewed Creative Partnerships as a vehicle for social and economic regeneration, and that the government's interest in creativity was linked with employability, rather than "art for art's sake", yet the report by Banaji *et al* (2006) showed that the government's chosen definition of creativity was based upon a history of ideas about human thought and behaviour that did not support any definite application of that concept, making the government's use of "creativity" problematic. The aim of this thesis is to attempt to understand Creative Partnerships by examining its policy and practice, in order to uncover how, and why, an arts-based programme that was founded upon disparate accounts of human creative thought and behaviour came to be posited as a means to 'transform young people's aspirations' (Morris, 2003).

Morris' (2003) account of Creative Partnerships suggests that New Labour did not intend the programme to be understood in isolation from its commitment to economic and social renewal. Therefore, in addition to exploring the rhetoric of creativity, this thesis considers New Labour's allegiance to the neoliberal belief that the free market model is the most efficient means of ordering society (Neelands *et al*, 2006: 99), and how it sought, under the 'Third Way', to eliminate material and cultural inequalities through a limited re-distribution of various forms of existing capital, (identified by Bourdieu (1986) as *economic capital*; *cultural capital* and *social capital*) without attempting to restructure the relations of production, which Marxian forms of socialism posit as fundamental to the elimination of inequalities (Neelands *et al*, 2006: 99), and this thesis considers the role of education in New Labour's economic plan. Creative Partnerships is not, perhaps, the most obvious choice of programme to illustrate how New Labour blended economics and education: in *The Education Debate*, Stephen Ball (2010: 185) offers an analysis of New Labour's academies programme, and claims that academies are intended to 'blur welfare state demarcations between state and market, public and private, government and business', and 'involve a self-conscious attempt to promote entrepreneurship and competitiveness', and the

relationship between the academies programme and neoliberalism is, therefore, overt. In comparison, Creative Partnerships is a subtle manifestation of Third Way thinking, and as if to underscore this point, several proposed academies have been ‘seen off’ by groups of local parents and trade unionists - suspicious of their means and motive (Ball, 2010: 186) - while Creative Partnerships has been warmly received. In choosing to examine Creative Partnerships, rather than a more aggressive instance of Third Way policy, this thesis hopes to reveal how a distinct economic agenda has been quietly transformed into a set of taken-for-granted “truths” about education.

According to Foucault (1977: 49), ‘Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own intervention’. In response to Foucault’s theory, this thesis does not confront, head on, New Labour’s use of Creative Partnerships as a form of economic policy. Instead, it attempts to tease out the intervention necessary to constitute Creative Partnerships as an “object” that functions in a particular manner, and in so doing endeavours to reveal *how*, as well as *why*, ideas are politically embraced. This thesis is structured in two parts that aim to develop an understanding of Creative Partnerships, firstly by considering the major discourses that construct Creative Partnerships, and secondly by examining a particular instance of Creative Partnerships. Part I consists of Chapters One to Six. Chapter One examines the history of education in England, and the association of ideas about education, the self and society; Chapter Two explores the history of ideas about human creative thought and behaviour; Chapter Three examines the process whereby a discourse is embedded in the social nexus, and the role that academics might be said to play in this process; Chapter Four examines Third Way thinking, and how ideas about the economy have influenced education policy; Chapter Five looks at how the desires of supporters of the arts in education were both satisfied and denied by New Labour through the establishment of Creative Partnerships; Chapter Six examines some studies of Creative Partnerships in order to consider the freedom offered by the programme to teachers, artists and pupils.

Three themes emerge in Part I: *individualism*, *contradiction* and *confusion*. Chapters One and Two consider how the medieval belief that subjectivity is constituted by practices of knowledge necessary for the operation of the pastoral

order came to be replaced by the humanist idea that subjectivity is constituted by practices of the self (Foucault, 1983/2000), and considers how the principle of individualism has influenced our understanding of the relationship between the self and society, and the relationship between the artist and the creative act. Contradiction is shown to be embedded within Creative Partnerships as a result of its reliance upon a definition of creativity that is based on the synthetic amalgamation of disparate accounts of the creative process, which are drawn from Romantic, scientific and postmodern sources, and the use of experiential learning that resembles progressivism after Dewey (1916/1952), but which promotes the idea that education might be used to cultivate the individual as an autonomous economic unit. Chapters Three, Five and Six identify confusion over the definition of creativity and the function of arts-based education, and reveal that, far from inhibiting the function of Creative Partnerships, this confusion enables ‘the participants to gain the benefits of aligning themselves with conflicting or mutually incompatible ideas and views without being seen to do so’ (Banaji, 2009:161). Thus, the lack of clarity over creativity is shown to be advantageous to politicians, who are committed to sustaining a ‘highly regulated, performance-based audit culture’ and to safeguarding individuals’ wellbeing (Banaji, 2009:161), and who posit Creative Partnerships as a vehicle for both, arguably irreconcilable, missions.

In Part II (Chapters Seven to Nine), attention is turned to an enquiry into a particular instance of Creative Partnerships. Chapters Seven and Eight provide the framework for this enquiry by considering, respectively, the wisdom and justice of “what works” when researching an educational programme designed to assist pupils on the margins of society, and how the issues of validity, reliability and generalisability might be addressed through research design. Chapter Nine details a study of a Creative Partnerships project, conducted in a secondary school in the north of England. The aim of the empirical enquiry is to explore a Creative Partnerships project from its inception to its completion, in order to understand how the themes identified in Part I play out in practice, and to discover what sense teachers, pupils and creative practitioners make of Creative Partnerships. The method is based on the qualitative approach described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), whereby a full account of the researcher’s observation and interaction is

given, so that readers are able to be “present” at the events and judge for themselves the validity of the data, like members of a jury.

The approach taken in the Conclusion deviates from the method used in the previous chapters. Rather than look inwards to Creative Partnerships in order to draw out the various ideas that give existence to the organisation, the Conclusion looks outwards, to the economic reasoning that is prior to the political impetus for Creative Partnerships. Thus, ideas such as ‘rational choice theory’ and ‘tournament theory’, which are absent from the discourses of creativity and employability that constitute Creative Partnerships, are critically evaluated in order to place Creative Partnerships within the system that it might be said to serve, and to challenge the merit of that service. Finally, this thesis follows Apple’s (2006) recommendation not to merely critique the neoliberal hegemony, but to discuss how things might be different, and it puts forward a model of arts education that counters the practice identified in the studies of Creative Partnerships reported in this thesis.

PART I

CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS IN CONTEXT

Chapter One

A brief history of English education

This chapter looks at the history of ideas about the value and purpose of education in England in order to understand the educational rationale of Creative Partnerships.

Introduction

In May 1997, New Labour came to power with the rallying cry of ‘Education, education, education’ (Blair, 1996), and the high profile that New Labour accorded education in its election manifesto captured the public mood: in March 1997 a survey found that 80% of the British public believed that government spending on higher education was an investment for the future (MORI: 1997), and in 1999, 85% of parents thought that half an hour’s homework every week day is important for children age 10-11 (MORI: 1999). Such faith in education was logical, given the apparent wealth gap between graduates and non-graduates in the UK at the end of the twentieth century: for example, in 1998 the Institute of Fiscal Studies published a report demonstrating that graduates earned 15-20% more than their peers who left education after their A levels (Patel, 1998). The UK was not alone in recognising the economic importance of education: in the same year that New Labour was elected, the Hamburg Declaration proclaimed that ‘literacy, broadly conceived as the basic knowledge and skills needed by all in a rapidly changing world, is a fundamental human right’ (Resolution 11, UNESCO, 1997). It would appear, then, that at the dawn of the new millennium public sentiment both here and abroad supported the notion that education enables the individual to “get on” in society, and it was against this backdrop of trust in education that Creative Partnerships was launched as a school-based programme for socially and economically deprived children (DCMS, 2001).

In spite of the widespread endorsement of education, the government unveiled Creative Partnerships as a scheme that neither instructed disadvantaged children in the traditional “three Rs” of reading, writing and arithmetic, nor conferred a qualification that might lead to higher-paid employment. Instead, the government offered Creative Partnerships as a ‘cultural pledge for school

children’ that promised to engage disadvantaged pupils in fun and creative activities: for example, Creative Partnerships hoped to enable children to go ‘backstage at the theatre’ or spend ‘a day on a film set’ (DCMS, 2001: 14; 18). This observation raises the question, in what way was Creative Partnerships considered an *educational* programme, rather than a recreational programme? In order to discover the didactic basis of Creative Partnerships, this chapter explores the history of ideas about the value and purpose of education in England, and in so doing seeks to understand Creative Partnerships by considering its relationship with the tradition of thought about pedagogy in England.

The historian V.H.H. Green (1971) warns that the over-simplification of the complexities of politics and life may give rise to half-truths, and it is apparent that in condensing English educational history into a single chapter I run the risk of distorting that history. However, while my account of the history of ideas about the value and purpose of education in England is by necessity limited, I have utilised first-hand accounts wherever possible in order to create a sense of how attitudes towards education have, and have not, changed across the ages; a phenomenon explored through reference to Foucault’s (1982/1994) views on subjectivity and power.

This chapter commences by tracing the history of beliefs about the value and purpose of education in England from the Middle Ages to the present day. It then examines public documents on Creative Partnership in order to consider how Creative Partnerships’ educational rationale relates to these beliefs.

Medieval learning: education as vocation

We are so accustomed to the belief that education enhances the individual and should be organised by the state to address social concerns - such as crime and nutrition - that it is difficult to imagine a time when we did *not* consider school to play a vital role in children’s intellectual, moral and social development. However, we need only look back a few hundred years to the Middle Ages to see a culture that valued academic study yet did not posit education as a means to “develop the self”. During the Middle Ages, the apprenticeship model was the dominant form of instruction, and although chantry priests taught apprentice tradesmen the rudiments of literacy as an adjunct to their trade skills (Lawson,

1967: 28), there was no superfluity of scholarly learning: beyond the basics of literacy and numeracy, academic study was considered to be essential for society yet non-essential for the individual, and this apparent paradox was the product of a particular kind of power structure that formed a subjectivity bound up with community interaction, rather than introspection. Medieval life revolved around the operation of the Church of Christ, the ‘good shepherd’ (John, 10:11), and Foucault (1982/2000: 332) employs the term ‘pastoral’ to describe the medieval modality of power, which was characterised by a preoccupation with the spiritual welfare of individuals. Academic study was, in effect, a sacred apprenticeship that played a key role in the maintenance of the pastoral order by providing society with priests and administrators of God’s law, in the same way that other apprenticeships provided society with stonemasons and wheelwrights. Young men who received an academic education were trained to know God’s will and were thereby qualified to guide the laity towards eternal salvation, which, according to Foucault (1982/1994), was the Church’s ultimate objective: given that one trained priest could guide a multitude from his pulpit, it was no more necessary for all boys to become erudite than for all boys to learn the stonemason’s craft, and medieval scholarly education was, therefore, reserved for the few to serve the spiritual needs of the many.

Although only a minority of medieval children had access to academic learning, the popular medieval conception of society as a single organism (see for example, John of Salisbury, 12th century/1977: 47-48) ensured that the non-learned man was not held in contempt: although priests formed the ‘soul’ of the commonwealth, non-learned men formed its ‘body’, making them indispensable to the commonwealth’s temporal existence. This somewhat egalitarian conceptualisation of society had interesting implications for equality of opportunity, and in the light of our current difficulty with social mobility in the UK (see for example, Sutton Trust, 2008) it is perhaps surprising to note that, during the Middle Ages, a child’s social standing did *not* determine his access to scholarly education or advancement in the Church. For example, Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, was probably the son of a serf, and Breakspear, later Pope Adrian IV, was the son of a menial (Curtis and Boulton, 1966: 112), and thus while the Church sanctioned the social ranking of men on earth, it seems that it did not allow the social order to impinge upon the operation of the pastoral order.

Renaissance humanism: education as the development of the self

From the end of the fourteenth century, the study of Christian texts was increasingly supplemented by the study of human culture, particularly the pre-Christian civilizations of Ancient Greece and Rome, and this study of the classical world led to a profound re-evaluation of ideas about the purpose and value of education. Under Renaissance humanism, learning was posited as a means to develop what Hale (1971: 300) terms ‘moral self-scrutiny’, and while Renaissance humanism left intact the medieval belief that the foundation of all knowledge is Christ, ‘the incarnate reason of all reasons’ (Nicholas of Cusa, fifteenth century/1977: 674), the shift in focus from divine revelation to introspection led to the emergence of what Foucault (1966/2007: 36) describes as the ‘awareness of that sovereign rationality in which we recognise ourselves’. Theologians such as Martin Luther (1520/1977: 723) urged each Christian to develop his ‘inward man’ by renouncing the traditional dependence upon priestly elucidation of texts, and Luther encouraged individuals to cultivate a personal relationship with Christ through the study of what Juan de Valdés (1535/1977: 727) described as ‘*his own book*’ of the self. This push towards self-instruction, rather than priestly instruction, was assisted by the development of the printing press, which enabled both sacred and classical texts to be rapidly distributed to a new reading public. For the first time, academic study was no longer seen as the “job” of priests, like building cathedrals was the “job” of stonemasons, and while Renaissance men did not feel compelled to learn all the craftsmen’s trades, it was held to be the duty of each individual to become a repository of academic knowledge in order to follow the Ancient Greek maxim to “Know thyself”. Although Foucault (1983/2000: 278-279) identifies the ancient Stoics, rediscovered by the Renaissance humanists, as the source of this movement towards self-knowledge, he cites the seventeenth century philosopher Descartes as the source of the modern disassociation of self-discipline from the revelation of truth: for Descartes, our capacity for thought, rather than our “goodness”, enables us to gain access to the truth through direct evidence, rather than divine disclosure. By celebrating the texts of ancient philosophers, the Renaissance humanists thus laid the groundwork for the

emergence of a new subjectivity, constituted by what Foucault (1983/2000: 278) terms ‘practises of the self’ rather than ‘practises of knowledge’.

The movement away from the belief that self-knowledge is produced by weighing knowledge of one’s actions against knowledge of God’s law was accompanied by a shift in the perception of the educated man’s duty to society. If we look at a medieval essay on ‘How the Student Should Behave’, written during the thirteenth century by John of Garland, we find the following advice to scholars:

Even though you be a Socrates, if you have rude manners, you are a ditch-digger...You will be courteous if you perform the following works of mercy: if at night you give beds to the poor, if you heal the sick, if you clothe the freezing, give food to the beggar, console the afflicted, and offer drink to the thirsty. (John of Garland, thirteenth century/1977: 86-7)

Three centuries later, Thomas Lupset composed ‘An Exhortation to Young Men’ in which he prescribes a list of texts by Ancient Greek and Roman writers, and tells scholars:

These works I think sufficient to show you what is virtue, and what is vice; and by reading of these, you shall grow into a high courage to rise in judgement above the common sort to esteem this world according to his worthiness, that is, far under the dignity of these virtues, the which the mind of man conceiveth and rejoiceth in. These books shall lift you up from the clay of this earth and set you in a hill of high contemplation from whence you shall look down and despise the vanity that foolish men take in the deceitful pomp of this short and wretched life. (Lupset, 1529/1956: 85)

While John of Garland’s essay demonstrates the medieval belief that practices of knowledge are synonymous with practices of Christian duty, Lupset’s Renaissance text makes no reference to the link between learning and service to the flock. In place of the medieval notion of society as a single organism guided to salvation by knowledge of God’s will, we see in Lupset’s essay the depiction of the *self* as a discrete unit developed through study, and the scholar’s responsibility is to this self, rather than to society. Under Lupset’s account, the humanist scholar is absolved from the responsibility to pass on his learning to the collective, and, furthermore, he is encouraged to ‘rise in judgement above the common sort’. For Lupset, un-educated men do not complement educated men like the body complements the soul, but instead serve to validate the superiority of cultivated

minds. By presenting academic study as a route to personal development, the Renaissance humanists opened the way for education to be used as a means to distinguish between the wealthy *l'uomo universale*, who was able to immerse himself in a wide-ranging course of urbane learning, and the poor scholar and craftsman who needed to acquire specific knowledge for employment. Indeed, according to Hale (1971: 293), much of the appeal of universalism lay in its ability to mark the rich from the poor.

Education for the poor in the Early Modern State

As a result of the English Reformation (from 1534), the pastoral order that had been regulated by the Church gave way to a new social order regulated by the State, and this shift in power had a profound effect on education. Following the dissolution of the monasteries and the confiscation of Church property, the seizure of communal land by private individuals through Act of Parliament escalated, and thousands of peasants were turned off the land, creating widespread famine and unemployment. In 1598 and 1601 two Acts of Parliament, known together as the Elizabethan Poor Law, were passed by government in order to address the problem of poverty in England, and these Acts laid down requirements for pauper children to be placed (at the expense of their parish) as apprentices in the homes of masters until the age of 24 for males, and 21 for females (*Poor Relief Act*, 1598, in Dawson & Wall, 1971). These government-directed apprenticeships, unlike those operated by the medieval guilds or the Church, were primarily intended to address the problem of how to house and feed young vagrants, rather than how to educate children for their future roles in society, and their educational value was dubious.

In spite of the Poor Law, child destitution continued to be a problem, and in 1699 the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge was formed against a backdrop of concern about crime and “Popery”, the dreaded twin progeny of poverty. Although charitable in status, the SPCK was the first national body in England to organise elementary schools, and the rationale of the SPCK schools owed much to the medieval belief that the individual might be steered towards salvation through correct instruction in God’s will. Following Robert Raikes’s “unsettling” discovery that children employed six days a week in a Gloucester pin

factory were making Sunday - their one day of recreation - 'like hell' for the adults (Raikes, 1780/1969: 3), a Sunday School Society was established in 1785 to morally improve England's child workforce, which underscored the association between education and morality.

Education for the rich in the Early Modern State

The material gulf that emerged between the dispossessed and the enriched citizens of the newly emerging State was mirrored in their relative access to scholarly learning, and a parallel might be drawn between the physical enclosure of land and the metaphorical enclosure of education. While indigent children were placed in squalid apprenticeships and encouraged to attend Sunday school for their moral well-being, more affluent boys were sent to grammar schools to receive a course of study originally designed to train boys from all walks of life for the priesthood. The close relationship that had developed between academic study and social standing had given rise to what might be described as a cult of education, making "gentlemanly" instruction irresistible to parents in a position to demonstrate their wealth by sending their sons to grammar school. In 1693 John Locke published an essay on education in which he criticised the practice of teaching Latin to boys who were destined to become tradesmen, rather than gentlemen, on the grounds that such an education had no instrumental value (Locke, 1693/1995), but in spite of his objection to non-relevant learning, Locke had arguably strengthened the appeal of classical education through his own treatise on the human mind, published in 1690. According to Locke (1690/1995), the mind is a blank slate inscribed through experience, and under Locke's account the child of the tradesman and the child of the aristocrat are born with equally unformed minds: any parents subscribing to this view would obviously desire the best education for their child in order to maximise the development of that child's mind, no matter how narrow its employment prospects might actually be. Since the Renaissance, the best education had been held to be a classical education, and through the repetition-over-time of a course of study designed to cultivate the individual according to humanist principles, this belief became a self-fulfilling prophesy: two centuries after Locke, Lord Chesterfield remarked that 'Classical knowledge

is absolutely necessary for everybody, because everybody has agreed to think and call it so' (Chesterfield, 1892/1970: 66).

Education and 'the art of government'

The displacement of medieval subjectivity (constituted by practices of knowledge) by modern subjectivity (constituted by practices of the self) was part of a wider re-configuration of the European social order, which entailed the gradual erosion of feudal pastoral power and culminated in the emergence, during the eighteenth century, of 'the art of government' (Foucault, 1978/2000: 207). According to Foucault (1978/2000), the 'art of government' was a modality of power that both individualised and totalised subjects, enabling the State to be governed not through the enforcement of law but through the operation of what Foucault describes as 'a range of multiform tactics' (1978/2000: 211), chief among which was economy (hitherto a model of private government of the family), which introduced into political practice 'a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household and his goods' (Foucault, 1978/2000: 207). Education was immediately identified as a tactic compatible with the art of government, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau put forward an argument for the schooling of children that highlighted education's utility as a means to both create and sustain the State:

If, for example, [children] were early accustomed to regard their individuality only in its relation to the body of the State, and to be aware, so to speak, of their own existence merely as a part of that of the State, they might at length come to identify themselves in some degree with this greater whole, to feel themselves members of their country, and to love it with that exquisite feeling which no isolated person has save for himself; to lift up their spirits perpetually to this great object, and thus to transform into a sublime virtue that dangerous disposition which gives rise to all our vices. (Rousseau, 1758/1995: 233)

By harking back to the Ancient Greeks' claim that society is a construct, rather than a natural phenomenon beyond human control, Rousseau was able to present a contemporary vision of education bound up with the issue of governance. The general endorsement of beliefs about the malleability of the child's mind; the link between classical study and self-development, and the association of pedagogy

with morality meant that, by the end of the eighteenth century, the rationale of England's current system of State education had been established.

Education and the principle of utility

In spite of the supposed potential of education to shape citizens and mould society, mass elementary education for the poor was resisted in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, partly due to sectarian concerns that state education might mean Church of England education, and partly due to the popularity of Jeremy Bentham's (1789/1995) writings on the principle of utility. Bentham lay to rest the medieval notion of the body social as a single organism united in purpose, claiming:

The community is a fictitious *body*, composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting as it were its *members*. The interest of the community then is, what? – the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it. (Bentham, 1789/1995: 307)

According to Bentham, if individuals are allowed to pursue pleasure and avoid pain, then the sum of this pursuit will be the greatest happiness for the greatest number, and whereas medieval writers such as John of Salisbury had urged individuals to suppress their 'private self-will' (twelfth century/1977: 90) in order to operate within the collective, under utilitarianism the exercise of private self-will was not held to be incompatible with the pursuit of happiness. The debate over whether Bentham should be described as an individualist or collectivist is longstanding (see for example, Axel Davies, 1995), with contention arising from the observation that while Bentham advocated the establishment of state-funded schools of technology (Armstrong, 1970: 92-3), his maxim that 'nothing ought to be done or attempted by government' (Bentham in Wardle, 1970: 4) was used to promote a *laissez-faire* approach to education. Exponents of individualism saw education as a private matter and feared that state assistance might create a culture of dependency, reducing the individual's self-efficacy and thereby reducing the overall efficacy of the community. Thus, while the benefits of classical education for the elite were lauded, it was by no means agreed that academic study was desirable for working class children.

Although many Victorians were committed to the principle of self-reliance, epitomised by Samuel Smiles' best-selling text, *Self-Help* (1859/2008), the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism was observed more in theory than in practice. The age-old belief that education is bound up with morality exerted a powerful influence on attitudes towards schooling, and as early as 1833 a grant of £20,000 had been made available by Parliament for the funding of elementary schools for the poor. This step towards state assistance, although small, signalled the government's desire to intervene in the education of disadvantaged children: once the decision to intervene had been taken, the only genuine argument that remained was over the scale of the intervention, and the mantra of self-help was used to minimise, rather than prevent, government involvement in the education of the poor.

The 1870 Education Act

In 1870, Parliament passed Forster's Education Act, which established a framework for universal elementary schooling in England and Wales, supplementing the voluntary bodies with school boards and making attendance compulsory for most children. On the face of it the 1870 Act appeared to be a victory of collectivism over individualism; a confirmation of the belief that education is a public, rather than private, concern. However, while the 1870 Act may be viewed as a collectivist response to the social problems thrown up by issues such as the regulation of child labour, growing enfranchisement, and England's economic decline, the form of elementary education intended by the Act meant that the school was couched as an extension of the home (Jones, 1990), rather than an instrument of government, thereby blurring the boundary between state interference and self-reliance and appeasing supporters of *laissez-faire*. Under the Act, elementary teachers were cast as surrogate parents to the urban poor, and were locked in a hierarchy that gave them powers to beat their pupils yet made them subordinate to their "superiors" who employed them, as though teachers and pupils were indeed members of the same disadvantaged family (Jones, 1990: 62). The logic of such "parenting" appeared sound, given the contemporary hysteria over the menace posed to society by "feral" children, as in this account by Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth:

A London child, living in a street of brothels and thieves' dens with parents living abandoned lives, spends his days in the Kennel among sharp-witted restless little creatures like himself. He is his own master. His powers of observation are singularly acute; his powers of decision rapid; his will energetic. He is known as 'the arab of the street'. He learns a great deal of evil. Perhaps he is an accomplished thief or beggar, or picks up a precarious living by holding horses, sweeping a crossing or costermongering. (Kay-Shuttleworth, c. 1850, in Wardle, 1970: 43-44)

If poor children could be taken off the streets and given moral instruction by surrogate parents in a pseudo-domestic environment, then elementary education of the poor could be conceived of as beneficial to the middle and elite classes, hitherto at risk of being robbed. The desire to "civilise" working class children was, however, tempered by the fear that too much education might disrupt the social order by educating children "above their station" (Wardle, 1970), and the attempt to balance moral development with social compliance produced a half-hearted attempt at critical thinking, and fostered a disconnection between classroom study and children's future careers (which, presumably, they might reject if their critical faculties were too finely honed). Thus, while Prussia in the late nineteenth century was educating its workforce to be literate and numerate; skilled in crafts; proficient in engineering, and knowledgeable about science (Applebaum, 1992: 427), the English elementary schools offered poor children a curriculum hardly more advanced than that provided centuries earlier by chantry priests for the instruction of medieval tradesmen.

National cultural unity

Victorian concern over the social order was not, however, limited to a consideration of working class sensibility. Reflecting on the potential for spiritual anarchy, Matthew Arnold (1869) proposed that social disaster might be averted through the development of a national cultural unity. In a variation of Rousseau's earlier vision of education as a component of nation building, Arnold suggested that culture might be used to "Hellenise" what he saw as the rapidly expanding, Philistine English middle class. Arnold (1869) poured scorn on the notion that

England's greatness lay in her coal reserves, and he instead proclaimed that England's true and enduring wealth was her cultural heritage. In order to support a non-partisan claim for the place of classical education in English national life, Arnold attempted to disassociate classical education from the power held by the elite, claiming:

Now for my part I do not wish to see men of culture asking to be entrusted with power; and, indeed, I have freely said, that in my opinion the speech most proper, at present, for a man of culture to make to a body of his fellow-countrymen who get him into a committee-room, is Socrates's: Know thyself! and this is not a speech to be made by men wanting to be entrusted with power. (Arnold, 1869: 3)

However, in spite of Arnold's best efforts, it was difficult to persuade ordinary men and women that the cultural heritage of the elite was in any way "communal" property, since for generations classical education had been used as a marker of power and status in England. Although Arnold was preoccupied with the problem of how to civilise the allegedly Philistine middle classes, the rise of Germany as an economic and military power presented the ruling elite with a similar "problem" of how to develop a national cultural unity amongst the poor; a problem that was eventually addressed through the use of history readers in the early twentieth century elementary schools, which drew upon the English 'populist' tradition, and retold well-known episodes of English history in a 'romantic' fashion, and thereby promoted a sense of national identity that was not dependent upon elite cultural materials (Heathorn, 2000: 60).

Child-centred learning

While Arnold was attempting to promote elite culture as a universal good, and while educationalists were romanticising English history, philosophers in Germany were considering the power of learning to create what Froebel termed a 'harmonious personality'; not through children's engagement with their nation's cultural artefacts, but through the promotion of co-operative and mutually helpful living (Froebel in Curtis & Boulwood: 1966: 375; 466). Froebel's ideas inspired the American educational philosopher, John Dewey, who from 1896 ran the Chicago experiment in which he educated children age four to fourteen. Dewey's (1916/1952) experimental findings led him to conclude that all knowledge is

personal and is made by each individual for himself for the purpose of adapting himself to new situations, and as such Dewey's ideas shared some ground with the Renaissance theory of self-actualisation through education. However, while the humanists posited certain texts as key to self-development, Dewey challenged the notion that there exists an absolute truth that can be transmitted to the scholar, since the meaning of a concept depends on its relationship to the individual, and Dewey's views on culture were thus antithetical to Arnold's humanist stance:

...the idea of perfecting an 'inner' personality is a sure sign of social divisions. What is called inner is simply that which does not connect with others – which is not capable of free and full communication. What is termed spiritual culture has usually been futile, with something rotten about it, just because it has been conceived as a thing which a man might have internally – and therefore exclusively. (Dewey, 1916/1952: 143)

For Dewey, personal growth is the product of the individual's adaptation to the unfamiliar, and while the *result* of thought is important to the individual, it is subsidiary to the *process* of thought (Curtis & Boutlwood, 1966: 471), and he therefore rejected the attempt to indoctrinate children with cultural materials that ghettoised human experience. Instead, Dewey (1916/1952) promoted democracy, not as a political creed, but as a spirit of enquiry that cultivates individuals' ethical co-operation through shared experience, and in so-doing he positioned education as a means to develop the child's freedom of thought and social connectivity.

In 1929, Hughes Mearns published *Creative Power*, in which he drew a distinction between traditional pedagogy and the newer types of learning that had developed in the wake of Dewey, namely 'experience-learning, research-learning, sharing-learning and creative learning' (Mearns, 1929/1958: 242). Of particular interest to Mearns (1929/1958:7) was how such forms of learning might help develop pupils' 'individual self-expression in writing', and his supposition was that 'Children are creative persons, not scholiasts' (1929/1958:9). In keeping with Dewey, Mearns (1929/1958: 245) claimed that traditional learning diminishes children's creative power by focussing on the things to be learned rather than what is happening to the learner, and he devised strategies for 'indirect teaching' that supported children's individual development. According to Ward (1958: xv), Mearns' technique revolutionised elementary school teaching in the USA. In England, child-centred learning likewise gained popularity, and teachers in England embraced in particular the notion that progressivism might help support

the democratic rights of the individual, which had arguably been overlooked by educational policy such as the 1870 Act. For example, in *Child-centred education*, Harold Entwistle (1970) claimed:

In liberal democratic communities there is a long standing conviction that there exists a moral obligation to minister to individual differences. This ethical concern for individual well-being is rooted in our religious tradition. Since God allows no sparrow to fall to the ground unheeded, the Christian cannot be less concerned with the welfare of any other human being. (Entwistle, 1970: 25)

In this manner, English progressive education bore a surface resemblance to the medieval shepherding of individual souls. However, while the medieval pastoral order was preoccupied with sustaining the collective by apprenticing children to necessary trades, child-centred education was preoccupied with the humanist notion of self-development, and was therefore antithetical to vocational instruction. For example, Entwistle (1970: 26-27) argued that ‘early specialization leads to cultural fragmentation and to a lop-sided personal development’, which prevents the individual ‘bringing a rational and critical intelligence to bear on the business of life’, and Hirst (1974) argued that since liberal education is aimed at achieving an understanding of experience in many different ways, the syllabi should be constructed to include *all* the disciplines, rather than be tailored to the needs of industry. For this reason, exponents of child-centred learning were antithetical to the vocational learning on offer in many English secondary schools prior to the 1960s.

Secondary education for all

The 1870 Education Act was followed by a series of Acts of Parliament that expanded educational provision in England, but it was not until 1944 that the right to a secondary education was established for all children, regardless of social rank. Under Butler’s Education Act of 1944, state-funded grammar schools were created alongside technical schools and modern schools. The grammar schools emulated the programme of study on offer in the private and public schools, and entered pupils for accredited examinations to gain admission to the universities, and thereby offered children from humble backgrounds a route into the white-collar professions. Birch (1974: 55) identifies Butler’s Education Act as the

greatest single achievement of the Coalition Government in domestic affairs, and this gesture towards equality of opportunity was arguably made in recognition of the unity of purpose demonstrated by all classes during the Second World War. Clearly, the 1944 Education Act was more generous towards working class children than the 1870 Education Act. However, although Butler's Act made provision for poorer children to gain access to grammar schools by passing the 11-plus examination, it was assumed that the majority of working class children would attend the non-academic modern and technical schools, which had been simultaneously established to cater for the less able pupils destined for blue-collar employment. Besides being at odds with the ethos of progressive education (as discussed previously), teachers in the technical schools found themselves struggling to keep pace with technological advancements in industry, and in 1959 the Crowther Report into secondary education questioned the logic of teaching industrial skills to prospective apprentices, claiming:

There may be less need in the future of "skill" in the old fashioned sense of the word; what will be needed in ever-growing volume will be the quality that can perhaps be described as "general mechanical intelligence." (Crowther, 1959: 449)

In 1963, *Half Our Future* (the titular forebear of *All Our Futures*, NACCCE, 1999) backed-up the Crowther Report's outlook on intelligence, arguing 'The essential point is that all children should have an equal opportunity of acquiring intelligence, and of developing their talents and abilities to the full' (*Half Our Future*, 1963: iv). Just over twenty years after Butler's Education Act, against a backdrop of increasing concern over the futility of technical instruction in an era of technological change, discomfort over the fairness of segregating 'labourers' from 'philosophers' (Medway, 1990), and the desire to develop pupils' general intelligence through child-centred learning, the Labour government duly issued Circular 10/65 requiring Local Education Authorities to submit plans to replace grammar, secondary and technical schools with comprehensive schools.

Although progressive and democratic notions of child development contributed to the creation of the comprehensive schools, their academic provision was hamstrung by the necessity for state pupils to pass accredited examinations in order to gain access to higher education and the white collar professions, and the humanist grammar school curriculum was, therefore, imported wholesale into the

new comprehensives (Simon, 1999). The disagreement over whether or not cultural artefacts are a conduit to self-development was *not* resolved in favour of progressivism, and the tension between humanism and progressivism was glossed over by the comprehensive system, which combined classical content with some progressive teaching methods. As a composite of progressivism and humanism, the fledgling comprehensives were open to criticism from both sides, and were attacked for being on the one hand too “trendy” and on the other hand too traditional. However, although the Conservatives vilified the comprehensives whilst in opposition, they did not abolish the comprehensives once in office, which perhaps bears testimony to the bankruptcy of ideas over what might replace these schools (Simon, 1999).

The National Curriculum and enterprise education

In 1979, the Conservatives came to power under Margaret Thatcher. After almost a decade in office, Thatcher eventually settled on the National Curriculum as a means to stabilise the underlying principle of secondary education. Launched in 1988, the National Curriculum put in place a ‘statutory entitlement to learning for all pupils’ (DfEE and QCA, 1999: 3). For the first time in English history, the government determined the content of what would be taught, set attainment targets for learning, and determined how performance would be assessed and reported (DfEE and QCA, 1999). Under the National Curriculum, children were legally obliged to study Shakespeare, in what was seen by many as an appeal to Matthew Arnold’s (1869) idea of “Hellenisation” through education. Indeed, Griffith (2000: 13) notes that the National Curriculum established a curriculum content and pedagogy ‘familiar to the middle classes in the middle of the nineteenth century’. This apparent triumph of humanism was, however, offset by the introduction of ‘new vocationalism’ (Griffith, 2000:8), an education policy that ostensibly served the needs of industry and business leaders by equipping working class pupils with generic employment skills such as time-management and computer literacy, rather than the job-specific skills that had proved inadequate in the 1950s (Griffith, 2000:8). For example, the TVEI (the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative), which was launched as a pilot scheme in 1983 and extended nationally in 1987, focussed on problem solving in real world

contexts, rather than rote learning for academic examination, and utilised child-centred methods that appealed to exponents of progressive education (Yeomans, 2002). Conservative education policy was, therefore, ingenious: by introducing the National Curriculum *and* vocational education into English schools, the Conservatives were able to satisfy both the traditionalists, who sought to preserve classical knowledge, and business leaders, who demanded “employment ready” school leavers, and by utilising aspects of child-centred learning they were also able to appease some exponents of progressive education, who sought to develop the whole person.

Progressivism and neoliberalism

Under the Conservative government, progressivism was rebranded ‘enterprise education’. This rebranding established a distinction between Conservative policy and “looney left” progressivism, famously denounced during the 1960s and 1970s by the right-wing *Black Papers* (see Ward & Connolly, 2008). Nevertheless, the continuation of child-centred learning is apparent. For example, in *Enterprise, Education, Experience*, Judi Cotton (1991: 5) detailed ‘The Traditional v Enterprise Approach’ to teaching, noting that ‘traditional teaching’ is *content* focussed and produces a ‘Passive reactive student’; while ‘enterprise teaching’ is *process* focussed and is ‘Student owned’. Arguably, the Conservative government’s interest in progressivism during the 1980s was kindled by the emergence of neoliberalism, rather than interest in Dewey’s theory of democracy; a phenomenon discussed in more detail in Chapter Four of this thesis. In brief, progressivism encourages individuals to find the value of things through personal experience, rather than identify the value of things through reference to categories of description provided by others (Fairfield, 2009: 241), and the rejection of categories of social description (for example, ‘working class’), and the adoption of individualised accounts of the self complemented the neoliberals’ atomized view of the state. In addition, the promotion of ‘enterprise education’ encouraged pupils to think of the individual as an autonomous economic unit (see Chapter Four).

In 1997, New Labour came to power, ending 18 years of Conservative government. Although education had played a key role in the New Labour party's election manifesto (see Blair, 1996), once in office New Labour did nothing to dismantle the scaffold that the Conservatives had erected around secondary schooling. Indeed, in its first White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE, 1997: 61), New Labour praised the Conservative policy of enterprise education, and promised to ensure 'sustained momentum for school business links'. In its review of the National Curriculum in 2000, New Labour honoured the Conservative divide between core and foundation subjects (Phillips and Harper-Jones, 2003), and many educationalists expressed disappointment over New Labour's commitment to what they considered to be old-fashioned and stultifying classroom practice (Phillips and Harper-Jones, 2003). Thus, following New Labour's election victory of 2001, the party felt the need to defend its record on education in its White Paper, *Schools Achieving Success* (DfES, 2001). Here, under the chapter entitled 'Reform in Progress', New Labour described and defended its emphasis on measurement and performance, particularly its literacy and numeracy strategies, all of which allegedly 'proved' educational success (Phillips and Harper-Jones, 2003: 130). In a mirroring of the Conservative's establishment of the National Curriculum and the TVEI, in 2001, New Labour simultaneously defended its commitment to content-based education in *Schools Achieving Success* and published a Green Paper, *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years*, in which it unveiled its new arts-based initiative, Creative Partnerships, that drew upon progressivism. According to New Labour, the process-based drive of Creative Partnerships would assist disadvantaged children by developing their 'thinking and communication skills', and would tackle 'disaffection and alienation' amongst the poor by enhancing deprived children's 'personal and social development' (DCMS: 2001: 21). It would appear, then, that the Conservative and Labour governments both grounded their main education policy in the humanist, content-based tradition enshrined in the National Curriculum, yet simultaneously availed themselves of progressive, process-based pedagogy in order to encourage pupils to adapt to their environment.

Summary of the history of education

This brief account of the history of English education has shown that our ideas about education are interwoven with our ideas about the self and the social order. Foucault (1997: 249) points out that, during the Enlightenment, a decisive break with Christian tradition occurred when verbalising the self in order to abandon that self (surrendering self-will to God's will) mutated into the practice of verbalising the self in order to constitute a new self, and this new individualism spawned various social theories, including Bentham's principle of utility, which continue to inform education policy in England today. The fascination with individualism and *laissez-faire* is, then, bound up with the rejection of the pastoral order and the attendant belief that subjectivity is constituted by 'practises of knowledge' necessary for the shepherding of souls (Foucault, 1983/2000: 278). In place of the medieval notion of the 'body social' - a single entity comprised of all members of society - the Renaissance humanists posited the self as a discrete unit developed through erudition, and subsequent attempts on the part of figures such as Matthew Arnold (1869) to establish a 'national cultural unity' have been prompted not by a medieval sense of human connectivity, but by the belief that it is possible to homogenise the public's tastes and values through exposure to texts that promote the "ideal English self" (Heathorn, 2000). This agenda was held in contempt by Dewey (1916/1952: 29), who argued that learning should take the form of a democratic, moral enquiry in which children learn how to take part in 'conjoint and cooperative doings', but the mantra of individualism is, arguably, so well established in England that Dewey's ideas about progressivism have been subverted by politicians on both the left and the right, who have encouraged pupils to discover and develop their self-reliance, rather than their interdependence, through experiential learning.

Creative Partnerships

Creative Partnerships is the off-spring of enterprise education (a variant on progressivism), and evidence in support of this claim may be found through an examination of Creative Partnerships' website, in which Creative Partnerships locates its operation within the tradition of progressivism/enterprise education in

three ways. First, Creative Partnerships positions education as a means to develop generic skills that are attractive to employers:

Our work is designed to increase young people's enjoyment of education, and opportunities for them to express themselves. But we also believe that this will give them the kind of skills that employers really need: individuals who communicate well and persist to succeed. (Creative Partnerships, 2009 a)

Second, Creative Partnerships identifies its core concept as 'creativity', which it defines as a way of engaging with the world that is attractive to employers:

We believe creativity is the wider ability to question, make connections, innovate, problem solve and reflect critically. These are skills that are demanded by today's employers. (Creative Partnerships, 2009 b: 4)

Third, Creative Partnerships equates process-focussed education with democratic empowerment:

Creative learning empowers young people to imagine how the world could be different and gives them the confidence and motivation to make positive change happen. This helps young people to engage with their education and to achieve. (Creative Partnerships, 2009 b: 4)

Creative Partnerships also alludes to the tradition of thought that equates education with morality. For example, in *Creative Partnerships: Changing Young Lives* (CCE, 2009) it states:

For some pupils their involvement in Creative Partnerships proved a turning point; good attendance and participation in learning continued beyond the project. In a small but significant proportion of schools, improvements in pupils' attitudes and behaviour during projects signalled the start of a return to schooling. (CCE, 2009: 18)

The didactic purpose of Creative Partnerships is, then, to assist children who are 'held back by poverty of aspiration' by cultivating their self-development (DCMS, 2001:17). Creative Partnership's mission is arguably influenced by Bentham's principle of utility, since it aims to make disadvantaged and disaffected children socially integrated (thereby supporting the nation's moral wellbeing) and employable (thereby supporting the nation's economic wellbeing), and although the logic of its approach appears to be grounded in the democratic tradition of Dewey, and in particular his 'moral-political' vision of educational practice (Fairfield, 2009: 245), in reality Creative Partnerships is aligned with the view of the self as a discrete unit; a view which supports the notion that community is, in the words of Bentham, 'fictitious' (1789/1995: 307).

While this chapter has attempted to uncover the educational rationale of Creative Partnerships by locating the programme within a history of thought about the value and purpose of education in England, it evidently leaves unanswered the question: why creativity? The next chapter therefore explores *The Rise of Creativity*.

Chapter Two

The Rise of Creativity

This chapter looks at the history of ideas about the creative process in order to understand the emergence of “creativity” and how this concept informs Creative Partnerships.

Introduction

During the 1980s, the philosopher Kristeller (1992: 66) attempted to research the history of creativity, and was surprised to discover that the word did not appear in his 1971 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Although the noun “creativity” made its debut in 1875 as a derivative of the adjective “creative” (Pope, 2006: xix), it was not until the last decades of the twentieth century that it entered common usage. According to Wolverton (1935: 289), new words appear when words or phrases within the body of existing language are found to be either too awkward or inadequate to fulfil the meaning of a new idea. This would suggest that, at some point during the late twentieth century, an inadequacy within the body of existing language prompted individuals to adopt the word “creativity” to describe a new idea about human creative behaviour. However, in the NACCCE report of 1999 that gave rise to Creative Partnerships, the authors claim that creativity has ‘an elusive definition’ (1999: 27) and that there is *no* particular idea that is best captured by this word. Although the NACCCE (1999: 29) report settles upon the definition of creativity as, ‘Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value’, it concedes that it is not really possible to pin down the meaning of creativity because of its ‘particular association with the arts’, and the ‘complex nature’ of creative activity and the variety of scientific theories that have been developed to explain it (NACCCE, 1999: 27). If the authors of the NACCCE report are correct, then “creativity” came into popular usage as a catch-all or shorthand for the articulation of what would otherwise be an awkward and difficult to explain amalgamation of scientific and non-scientific accounts of creative behaviour. The purpose of this present chapter is to chart the *Rise of Creativity* in order to unpack the various and

contradictory ideas about human creative activity that have come to be subsumed by the word “creativity”, which in turn underpins the operation of Creative Partnerships.

According to Kearney (1988: 16), every concept tells a story. Given that the word “creativity” is relatively new, it is not possible to map the shifts and mutations that it underwent as it emerged through history (Nietzsche in Kearney, 1988: 16). Nevertheless, this word must have a history: some ideas about the creative process must have existed, prior to the birth of this concept, to necessitate its formulation. Therefore, rather than look at the short history of “creativity”, this chapter seeks to identify the decisive mutations in thinking, described by Kearney (1988: 17) as ‘paradigm shifts’ after the work of Kuhn (1962), which preceded the birth of the concept. In previous studies of this phenomenon, researchers have assumed a kinship between the concept of creativity and the beliefs about the creative process held in the past, and have attempted to account for the sudden appearance of “creativity” by positioning it as the product of a natural progression in thinking (see, for example Pope, 2005; Banaji *et al*, 2006). In contrast, this chapter traces the history of ideas about the creative process from the Middle Ages to the present day in order to demonstrate that the noun “creativity” that underpins Creative Partnerships is *not* the natural extension of ideas about the creative process held by scientists, philosophers and artists, but is instead a politically expedient, synthetic amalgamation of disparate beliefs.

This chapter begins by sketching a brief history of ideas about the creative process from the Middle Ages to the Present Day, and in keeping with Creative Partnerships’ primary focus, debate is grounded in the discussion of the arts. It then considers how and why the conflicting accounts of the creative process came together to form “creativity”, as utilised by Creative Partnerships.

Medieval asceticism: theocentric accounts of the creative process

In stark contrast to our modern fixation with the “artist as celebrity”, during the Middle Ages ideas about the creative process were informed by the belief that self-renunciation is the condition for salvation (Foucault, 1997: 228). To the medieval mindset, the creation of art was bound up with the memorisation of rules that must be followed to constitute the (best possible) self; a process informed by

the philosophical movements of Stoicism, which promoted a pedagogical model where the master-teacher speaks without asking questions, and the pupil listens without speaking (Foucault, 1997: 235-6; 246). Foucault draws attention to the mysticism of the early Christian interpretation of Stoicism:

In Christianity, asceticism always refers to a certain renunciation of the self and of reality because most of the time the self is a part of that reality that must be renounced in order to gain access to another level of reality. (Foucault, 1997: 238)

As part of the desire to gain access to another level of reality through self-denial, the artist did not identify himself with his work, and even such magnificent creations as the Wilton Diptych, painted for Richard II, were “anonymous”. This artistic self-effacement was bound up with the medieval conviction that both the liberal arts (those based solely on mental effort, such as philosophy) and the mechanical arts (those based on mental and physical effort, such as woodcarving) were founded upon rules that enabled salvation through asceticism: to have mastered an art was to have successfully “removed” the self through obedience to these rules. Under this theocentric worldview, medieval craftsmen employed ‘ars’, or skill based upon the knowledge of rules, in order to emulate the “original” activity of the Divine Creator, and the work of craftsmen such as painters, scribes and stonemasons was generally evaluated in terms of its capacity to ‘obediently serve and imitate the transcendent plan for Creation’ (Kearney, 1988: 12) and assist mankind’s collective salvation, rather than judged in terms of the *artist’s* originality, or the quality of his self-expression.

Renaissance humanism: the rejection of theocentric accounts of the creative process

During the Renaissance, the reawakening of interest in the art and thought of the Classical world led to the emergence of a new subjectivity, constituted by what Foucault (1983/1997: 278) terms ‘practises of the self’ as opposed to ‘practises of knowledge’(see Chapter One). The idea that the artist was simply employing the knowledge of rules was challenged by Vasari (1550, cited in Aston, 1996: 242) in his influential book *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, in which he claimed that the visual artist is ‘touched by the sacred

spark’, and that the ‘genius’ borrows the mantle of the Creator to bring forth material from the void (Kristeller, 1992). This “void” was the inward man, the self that lay dormant under asceticism but was allegedly awakened by introspection, and Sennett (2008: 72) identifies the Renaissance artist as ‘the emblematic first modern man’ who is driven inward to seek out his ‘autonomous creativity’ rather than outward to seek collective knowledge. An obvious manifestation of this re-conceptualisation of the artist as the point of genesis was the abandonment of the medieval practice of self-effacement, which occurred when Renaissance painters such as El Greco sought, and received, acknowledgement as the creators of their work (Kearney, 1988: 8-9). Concurrent with the repositioning of the artist as the genius, or generator, was the alignment of nature with the creative process. Leonardo da Vinci (1977: 532) claimed that good art is born of the artist’s sensory experience of the natural world, rather than his memorisation of artistic convention, and he urged artists to make their minds ‘resemble a mirror’ in order to accurately reflect what they encountered as they wandered through ‘the fields’. In thus combining introspection with first-hand experience of the world, the Renaissance artists sought to make flesh Protagoras’ (5th century BC cited in Epps, 1964: 223) secular claim that ‘man is the measure of all things’, and to add their own self-conscious reflections of nature to the treasure trove of God’s natural world.

Enlightenment rationalism: scientific accounts of the creative process

In 1687, Newton published *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, and his account of the “clockwork universe” - set in motion by God and governed by the laws of physics - provided the impetus for an investigation into the laws that might be said to govern human reason and creative endeavour. Philosophers duly grappled with Renaissance thought about the relationship between the artist’s mind and his sensory experience, in order to scientifically account for that relationship, and in 1735 Baumgarten coined the term ‘aesthetics’ to mean the science of sensitive cognition (Guyer, 2004: 15). Kant built upon Baumgarten’s work to put forward his own theory of artistic genius, claiming that ‘the imagination, in its freedom from all guidance by rules, is nevertheless represented as purposive for the presentation of the given concept’ (Kant, 1790, cited in

Guyer, 2004: 40). Kant's theory thus supported Vasari's rejection of the definition of *ars* as the mechanical adherence to rules. However, although Kant acknowledged the role of the human mind in creative behaviour, he sought to establish a distinction between the individual's response to art and nature that fore-grounded the function of quasi-mechanical reason in aesthetics. For example, according to Kant (1790, in Eaton, 2004: 65) we classify honeycombs as the product of the bees' labour, rather than the product of rational deliberation, and it is only to *God* as their creator that we ascribe the product of the bees' labour as art: as a result, the delight that we take in the colour and shape of honeycombs is pure and "free". However, if a *human* were to fashion an artificial honeycomb, we might still take delight in its form, but this pleasure would not be "free", since artistic appreciation involves *knowledge*, most importantly the knowledge of the intention and skill underlying the production of art (Eaton, 2004: 65). Thus, under Kant's account, the divinely implemented mechanisms, or "rules", that govern the appreciation of art and nature are discrete and universal.

Romanticism: rejection of scientific accounts of the creative process

In the early nineteenth century, Romanticism emerged as a backlash to the 'mechanistic philosophy' of the Enlightenment (Coleridge, 1816-1817/1968: 542), and two main characteristics of this movement revolutionised thinking about creative behaviour. First, figures such as Hazlitt (1818/1968: 62) urged individuals to reconnect with the "natural" creative forces that had allegedly been stifled by society's slavish emulation of the art and thought of the classical world. The celebration of nature as the primary instructor of the human soul (see for example, 'The Prelude' by Wordsworth, 1850) thereby served to dismantle Kant's opposition between nature and art (Kearney, 1988: 180). Second, the reawakening of interest in medieval thought (see Madame de Staël, 1813/1968: 64) and, in particular, the mystical pursuit of an alternate reality, resulted in the conceptualisation of the creative individual as a "visionary". Schelling (cited in Kearney, 1988: 180) claimed that the business of the poetic mind is not to *reflect* nature, but to rise above the unconscious creation of nature in order to produce a conscious "vision" of this creation in the work of art, and the Romantics duly pursued an altered state of consciousness; indeed Gautier (1874/1968: 70) fondly

recalled that ‘we were mad with lyricism and with art’. However, in spite of the “abandonment of the self to art”, the Romantics’ preoccupation with individual consciousness meant that they did *not* embrace the medieval practice of artistic self-effacement. Indeed, the transcendentalism of the Romantic artist was at odds with medieval asceticism, since the “madness” of the artist was induced through the inward reflection upon sorrow (Alvarez, 2005), and Hugo (1968: 5) notes that what medieval Europe had labelled *acedia*, or the grave sin of spiritual sloth and despair, came to be seen by the Romantics as the transcendental route to artistic genius. The cult of tragic sensibility reached its apogee in the Romantic fascination with suicide: Maggraff (1839/1968: 140) documented the German vogue for ‘noisy self-annihilation’ in a perversion of medieval self-denial, while Goethe (1774/2006) offered a blue-print for Romantic suicide in *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, in which he cemented the relationship between heightened sensibility and social dysfunction in his depiction of a sensitive, tormented artist, unable to function in a world of ‘rationalists and moral creatures’. In so doing, Goethe helped establish the myth of the creative individual as the quintessential “outsider”.

Modernism: reassertion of scientific accounts of creativity

Although Romanticism continues to inform our ideas about creativity today (and underpins popular slogans such as ‘live fast, die young’), the emotional fervour that inspired the heady association of genius with ‘the embraceable, the kissable, the whirlwind’ (De Musset, 1836/1968: 73) cooled in the mid-nineteenth century, and in 1859 the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* launched an entirely new way of thinking about creative behaviour. Darwin’s theory of evolution through natural selection had three major implications for thinking about the creative process: first, it undermined the traditional view of God as the final cause of creation; second it suggested that individual differences in ability are the product of heredity, and third it posited a relationship between the environment and adaptation (Brennan, 1998: 156). The first two claims attracted the interest of Darwin’s half-cousin, Galton, who devised mental tests to study the role of inheritance in genius in order to account for the difference between eminent and non-eminent persons (Albert and Runco, 1999: 25). Galton went on

to claim that selective breeding for intelligence is preferable to religious approaches to human betterment (Brennan, 1998: 158), and while Galton's eugenics programme is the most notorious outcome of his research, his theory also constituted a challenge to the traditional association of genius with Divine inspiration, and provided a framework for the pursuit of psychological inquiry into creative behaviour that side-lined the role of mysticism. The third aspect of Darwin's theory - that adaptation occurs in response to the environment – attracted the interest of the American philosopher, John Dewey (see Chapter One), who conducted educational experiments during the 1890s that led him to conclude that learning should be best understood as the control of means for achieving ends (Dewey, 1916/1952). With regard to the creative arts, Dewey (1934/1959) claimed that the promotion of cultural heritage in the classroom undermines children's ability to find solutions to current problems, and he argued that children's creative experience should therefore take precedence over the contemplation of historic works of art. In positing the creative process as a pragmatic journey of personal growth, Dewey thereby endorsed psychology's disregard for the notion of art as the expression of transcendental, universal "truths".

Concurrent with the development of evolutionary theories about the creative process, Romanticism itself underwent a "scientific revolution" during the late nineteenth century, when Freud employed rationalistic positivism to analyse the operation of the unconscious mind (Trilling, 1972: 280). Freud (1908/1972: 39) entrenched the Romantic association between the imagination and madness, claiming that 'If fantasies become overluxuriant and overpowerful, the conditions are laid for an onset of neurosis or psychosis', and he devised a programme of psychoanalysis in which patients verbalised their thoughts so that the analyst might identify and interpret the unconscious conflicts responsible for patients' emotional distress. According to Trilling (1972: 277), the common characteristic of both Freud and Romanticism was the perception of the hidden element of human nature and of the opposition between the hidden and the visible. Although Freud studied the relationship between the creation of art and neurosis, he made no attempt to "demystify" the arts: according to Freud, analysis 'can do nothing towards elucidating the nature of the artistic gift, nor can it explain the means by which the artist works – artistic technique' (Freud, cited in Trilling,

1972: 283-284). Instead, Freud believed that the analytical method might explain the ‘inner meanings’ of the work of art and explain the temperament of the artist (Trilling, 1972: 284), and Freud thereby strengthened, rather than undermined, the Romantic notion of the creative individual as someone who is set apart from others yet is able to share his/her unique “vision” with others via the medium of art. Ironically, in spite of the therapeutic agenda of psychoanalysis, the scientific basis of the claim that the artist’s life and works are ‘not only inextricable but also virtually indistinguishable’ appeared to suggest a close alliance between art and mental disturbance (Alvarez, 2005: 196), and arguably contributed, in the 1960s and 1970s, to a rash of suicides and drug-related deaths amongst visual artists, writers and musicians, who were making their own Romantic, transcendental attempt to ‘Break on Through (To the Other Side)’ (The Doors, 1967).

Postmodernism: heterogeneous accounts of the creative process

In 1950, Guilford gave an address to the American Psychological Association which instigated the scientific study of creativity as a distinct phenomenon. Although Plucker and Renzulli (1999) identify five major approaches to the scientific study of creativity (all informed by evolutionary theory) which developed in the wake of Guilford’s address, they note that the majority of psychologists have chosen to employ existing psychometric methods, derived from Galton’s study of genius, to directly measure creativity and/or its perceived correlates in individuals, even though this approach is antithetical to the Romantic and lay belief that creativity is ‘undefinable and unmeasurable’ (Plucker & Renzulli 1999; 35). It is not surprising, therefore, that theory about the creative process thrown up by experimental psychology in the early to mid-twentieth century proved unpopular with creative artists, and that the word “creativity” failed to enter common usage or appear in educational reports (see for example, Hadow, 1931; Spens, 1938), and was hence absent from Kristeller’s dictionary (1992). Indeed, Lodge (1972: 35) notes that literary theorists were still espousing Freud’s psychoanalytic theory long after it had been discredited by the scientific community, while simultaneously avoiding and vilifying the term “creativity” (Pope, 2006: 11).

The arts and humanities' dismissal of "creativity" was not merely based on a preference for Romanticism: at the same time that psychologists were claiming that individuals adapt differently to the environment, and that creative output is determined by the artist's genetic inheritance and environmental interaction, poststructuralist and postmodern theory about the arts was emerging, and this theory destabilised both the scientific *and* Romantic accounts of the creative process. In 1967, Barthes published 'The Death of the Author', in which he claimed that the image of Western literature is 'tyrannically centred' on the author's life history and personality (1967/2001: 186). Barthes (1967/2001: 188) argued that a text is not 'a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God)' but is instead a 'multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash'. Thus, under Barthes' account (1967/2001: 188) the text cannot be held to be the product of the writer's evolutionary adaptation *or* transcendental vision, because it is merely 'a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture'. For Barthes (1967/2001: 189), the *reader* is 'the space on which all the quotations that make up writing are inscribed', and a text/art work's unity lies therefore 'not in its origin but in its destination'. Although Barthes challenged the traditional notion of the artist as the point of genesis, Derrida went further by challenging the very notion of textual unity in his work *Of Grammatology*, also published in 1967, in which he introduced 'deconstruction' as a method to reveal how social phenomena have no definable meanings or determinable missions (Derrida 1967/1974). According to Derrida, meaning is never present but is always deferred (Derrida, 1967/1974), and under the terms of deconstruction, the listener, observer or reader cannot be said to unify a work of art, due to the 'irreducible alterity' of the world they attempt to construe (Caputo, 2006: 52). Postmodern theory thus generated uncertainty, both over the genesis of the artist's ideas and the possibility of establishing "meaning", and drew attention to the social construction of our beliefs, and the attendant risk of social manipulation; a frightening situation summed up by Kearney (1988: 3), who declared: 'We no longer appear to know who exactly produces or controls the images which condition our consciousness.'

In 1979, Lyotard (1979/2005: 60) addressed this crisis of confidence in his report, *The Postmodern Condition*, in which he suggested that the ‘little narrative’ that acknowledges its own contingency might come to substitute the overarching theories about truth and meaning derived from Romanticism and science, which had allegedly been destabilised by the philosophers. For many *artists*, however, there was no crisis: for example, during the 1970s, Andy Warhol celebrated the supposed impossibility of generating or transmitting meaning through art, stating: ‘People call me a mirror, and if a mirror looks into a mirror what does it see?’ (1975, cited in Kearney, 1988: 5), and he happily promoted the ‘reproduction’ of existing images, such as tins of soup, for commercial gain. For other artists, the abandonment of modernist ‘high seriousness’ (Harrison & Wood, 2003: 1042) was *not* accompanied by the abandonment of the Romantic notion of the artist as the point of genesis: for example, when Tracey Emin was asked how she might respond to the suggestion that installation pieces such as an unmade bed are ‘not art’, she replied: ‘If I believe they are art then they are art. I’m the artist, I decide the parameters’ (Emin, 2006). Other seemingly postmodern artists have expressed surprise over being identified as such: for example, in 2009 Malcolm McLaren denied that his art piece, ‘Paris: Capital of the 21st Century’ – a montage of French advertisements – is postmodern, on the grounds that he is ‘not seduced’ by postmodernism, and he claimed that his involvement with the 1970s’ punk movement was prompted by his fascination with Romanticism and the ‘noble art of failure’, rather than by postmodern theory (McLaren, 2009). Thus, Lyotard’s (1979/2005) assertion that the postmodern condition is defined by cynicism towards grand narratives was confirmed by the absence of any overarching account of the creative process in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century: while psychologists measured creativity, philosophers discussed the death of the author and artists practiced Romanticism, seemingly indifferent to one another.

Summary of the history of ideas about the creative process

At the end of the twentieth century, three discrete accounts of the creative process informed thinking in the UK:

- Artists, inspired by medieval transcendentalism (via Romanticism), attempted to reach beyond reality through the creation of art.

- Scientists, inspired by the Enlightenment quest to identify the laws that govern human reason, and by Darwin's theory of evolution, conducted research into human creative intelligence.
- Philosophers, inspired by the postmodern rejection of "originality", questioned the possibility of transmitting meaning through art.

Given the incompatibility of the above agendas, it is perhaps surprising that such diverse ideas about the creative process were encapsulated by the noun "creativity" in the last decade of the twentieth century. In the following section, I explore how conflicting ideas about the creative process were made to function as a single discourse of "creativity" in Creative Partnerships.

Creative Partnerships

In 2002, Creative Partnerships was established with the aim of 'joining together schools and cultural institutions to give children in deprived areas the opportunity to develop their creativity' (DCMS, 2001:8). The scheme was based on the NACCCE report of 1999, which had been commissioned by New Labour to make recommendations for the creative and cultural education of young people to the age of 16 (NACCCE, 1999:4). However, as stated at the start of this chapter, the authors of the NACCCE report admitted that creativity has an 'elusive definition' (1999: 27), and that 'Defining a process that covers such a wide range of activities and personal styles is inherently difficult' (1999: 28). Although the authors of the NACCCE report eventually settled on the definition of creativity as 'Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value' (1999: 29), this struggle to define creativity was not acknowledged by either the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, or the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, in the Green Paper that unveiled Creative Partnerships: *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years* (DCMS, 2001). Here, Blair confidently proclaimed that 'This Government knows that culture and creativity matter' (in DCMS, 2001: 3), and Smith declared that, 'In the years ahead, people's creativity will increasingly be the key to a country's cultural identity, to its economic success, and to individuals' well-being and sense of fulfilment' (in DCMS, 2001: 5). These confident and emphatic claims about creativity contrast with the slipperiness of the concept discussed by

the authors of the NACCCE report, which suggests that, in striving to define the word “creativity”, the authors of the NACCCE report in fact gave solid form to the concept in its UK educational context. This phenomenon is explored below.

All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture & Education (The NACCCE Report, 1999)

In spite of the fact that the word creativity was not in popular usage in the UK, the NACCCE report (1999: 27-28) identified what it claimed to be three prevalent definitions of creativity: the Sectoral Definition (creativity is synonymous with the creative arts); the Elite Definition (only rare people are creative), and the Democratic Definition (all people are creative). While the first two definitions stem from Romanticism, the third definition stems from the scientific account of creativity as a universal and domain general facet of human intelligence (see for example Sternberg, 1985), and is at odds with the previous two definitions. However, it is the Democratic Definition that the authors of the NACCCE report embraced, stating:

...we favour a democratic conception of creativity, one which recognises the potential for creative achievements in all fields of human activity; and the capacity for such achievements in the many and not the few...Creativity is a basic capacity of human intelligence. Human intelligence is not only creative, but multifaceted. It is for this reason that we argue that all young people have creative capacities and they all have them differently. (NACCCE, 1999: 28; 34)

Having aligned itself with the scientific perspective, the NACCCE report went on to disparage the Romantic idea of the creative individual as a “visionary”, claiming:

Imaginative activity in our terms is not the same as fantasising or imaging, although it may involve both. It is not simply producing mental representations of things that are not present or have not been experienced. Imaginative activity is the process of generating something original: providing an alternative to the expected, the conventional, or the routine. (NACCCE, 1999: 29)

Although the NACCCE report wanted to promote a pragmatic account of creativity, by its own admission the exclusive promotion of a Democratic Definition silenced two-thirds of the debate about the creative process (i.e. Sectoral and Elite). Therefore, rather than *ignore* the Sectoral and Elite definitions of creativity, the NACCCE report sought to tame, and then incorporate, these rival

definitions into its discourse on creativity. Thus, in spite of having disparaged the Romantic perspective on artistic activity, the NACCCE report adopted this same Romantic perspective in order to justify the claim that scientific activity, like the arts, is bound up with the creative imagination, and that this imagination enables the scientist to rise above the unconscious creation of nature in order to produce a conscious “vision” of this creation in the scientific hypothesis:

This is the source of the intellectual excitement and creative impulse of science: that it is concerned not only with facts, but with what counts as facts; not only with observation but with explanation – with interpretation and with meaning...Discovery in science is not always strictly logical. It often results from unexpected leaps of imagination: from sudden moments of illumination in which the scientist grasps the answer to a problem and then sets out to verify it by calculation. (NACCCE, 1999: 32)

Further evidence of the NACCCE report’s attempt to subvert traditional notions of the creative process in order to bolster its chosen definition of creativity is found in its discussion of the Romantic association of the creative process with the artist’s message. Here, the authors of the NACCCE report claim that:

The creative processes of the arts centre on the shaping and refining of a work in which its aesthetic qualities are central to its meaning. The look, sound and feel of work in the arts is inseparable not only from what it means, but from how it means. (NACCCE, 1999: 33)

As has been shown, the belief that the artist’s message is bound up with his/her medium of communication had been challenged by postmodernists, and in the light of this challenge, the NACCCE report not only failed to explain how ‘work in the arts’ is inseparable from ‘how it means’, but also went on to refute this very claim by appealing to postmodernism, stating:

The popular image of creative genius is of the lone individual producing unique insights out of the air. Some individuals do work alone, and the course of history has been changed by the extraordinary creative insights of particularly gifted people. But for everyone, creative achievement always draws from the ideas and achievements of other people: from the books, theories, poems, music, architecture, design and the rest that mark the trials of other people’s creative journeys. Just as different modes of thinking interact in a single mind, individual creativity is affected by dialogue with others. In these ways, creative development is intimately related to cultural development. (NACCCE: 1999: 38)

Thus, the authors of the NACCCE report attempted to align the ‘democratic’ element of the scientific account of creativity with the Romantic notion of the

“creative genius” by claiming that our shared culture underpins the work of brilliant individuals. In the light of the NACCCE report’s claim that art is socially constructed, the authors’ suggestion that the work of art’s ‘aesthetic qualities are central to its meaning’ (1999: 33) therefore appears to be a deliberate attempt to reassure diehard supporters of Romanticism that the integrity of the arts would not be challenged by broadening the scope of the creative act to include such things as maths puzzles.

Conclusion

The NACCCE report hammered home its message about creativity across ten chapters, and the remorseless assertion that creativity is democratic masked the report’s distortion of the beliefs about the creative process that were supposedly represented by this catch-all noun. Not only did the NACCCE report’s definition of creativity appear to offer something for everyone, whether they had a Romantic, scientific or postmodern outlook, its suggestion that creativity might ‘develop the unique capacities of all young people’ (NACCCE, 1999: 23) made its democratic definition of creativity difficult to censure. Indeed, the NACCCE report’s “creativity” is such a virtuous concept that politicians such as Tony Blair and Chris Smith have been able to use the noun to demonstrate their social conscience: for example, Tony Blair proclaimed that ‘the arts and creativity set us free’ (Blair in DCMS, 2001: 3), and while this assertion might be puzzling in light of the history of thought about the creative process outlined in this chapter, the complicated narrative spun around creativity by the NACCCE report makes Blair’s claim difficult to refute.

The NACCCE’s definition of creativity became the foundation of Creative Partnerships, and the rationale of Creative Partnerships was thereby bound up from its inception with the NACCCE report’s tangle of ideas about the creative process, which in part explains the confusion surrounding the programme, discussed in Part II of this thesis. The following chapter considers how academics helped embed the NACCCE report’s construct of creativity, and thereby provided an “anchor” for Creative Partnerships.

Chapter Three

Creativity and the Academy

This chapter considers how academic researchers have helped embed “creativity” in the social nexus and thereby helped provide an anchor for Creative Partnerships.

Introduction

In Chapter Two, the construct of creativity that underpins Creative Partnerships was shown to be a synthetic amalgamation of notions of “democratic” creative intelligence, Romanticism and aspects of postmodernism. While creativity is a seductive concept that aligns the common human condition with genius and promises to free impoverished children from the shackles of low self-belief, the potency of “creativity” arguably resides not in the robustness of the NACCCE’s (1999) definition of the concept, but externally within the social network of values and desires to which the concept appeals. According to Harvey (2009):

For any way of thought to become dominant, a conceptual apparatus has to be advanced that appeals to our intuitions and instincts, to our values and our desires, as well as to the possibilities inherent in the social world we inhabit. If successful, this conceptual apparatus becomes so embedded in common sense as to be taken for granted and not open to question. (Harvey, 2009: 5)

Clearly, creativity *has* become a dominant way of thought in England: one only has to note the plethora of books available for sale in the UK to realise that we have wholeheartedly embraced this construct in all its various guises (see for example, *Nurturing Creativity in the Classroom* by Beghetto & Kaufman (2010); *Brilliant Business Creativity* by Hall (2009); *Teach Yourself Developing Your Child’s Creativity* by Wilson (2009); *The Woman’s Book of Creativity* by Ealy (2009) *et cetera*). It would appear, then, that the conceptual apparatus of creativity has become thoroughly embedded in the UK. Bettencourt *et al*’s (2008) research into the transmission of ‘good ideas’ offers insight into how such embedding occurs. Bettencourt *et al* (2008: 27) applied several population models, inspired by epidemiology, to the spread of an appealing scientific idea, and concluded that

it was analogous to ‘a very slowly spreading disease’ that was passed, person-to-person, until every individual within the scientific community was infected. Using this analogy, academics might be described as both the “patient zero” of creativity (since psychologists came up with the initial construct) and the major source of infection (since academics’ journals, books and conferences disseminate the various ideas about creativity). Perhaps the most interesting aspect of embedding is its political significance: according to Foucault (1982/1994: 343), institutions play an important role in the establishment of power relations in society, but the ‘anchorage’ of power relations is ultimately found not within institutions but *outside*, in the plurality of discourse formations (Foucault, 1969/2009). If Foucault is correct, then an institution such as Creative Partnerships is impotent unless its rationale is tethered to an external discourse embedded in the social nexus. Corroborating evidence for this hypothesis is found in Anderson’s (1991) study of the mechanics of nationalism. According to Anderson (1991: 109-110), the ‘official’ rhetoric of nationalism within Europe in the nineteenth century was developed in response to ‘popular linguistic-nationalisms’, and derived its potency from this socially embedded construct. The aim of this chapter is, then, to explore how academic researchers have developed a discourse of creativity that is embedded in the UK, and have thereby empowered Creative Partnerships by providing an anchor for the ‘government’s flagship creative learning programme’ (Creative Partnerships, 2010).

There is an abundance of academic journals devoted to creativity (see for example, *Creativity Research Journal*; *Thinking Skills and Creativity*; *Creativity and Innovation Management*). In addition, articles on creativity appear in a wide range of journals dedicated to diverse topics (for example health; education; business). Rather than attempt an extensive literature review of creativity research, this chapter examines a sample of seven studies of creativity conducted in the UK and abroad before, and after, the publication of the NACCCE report. In so doing, this chapter aims to convey a sense of both the international discourse to which the NACCCE report was appealing when it drafted its account of creativity in 1999, and the ongoing discourse that has continued to embed this account of creativity in the UK since the launch of Creative Partnerships in 2002. The method employed is text analysis; a technique which places the researcher in ‘direct touch with the very object that he or she is investigating’ (Perakyla (2005:

869), which in this instance is the research documents that, in part, constitute the discourse of creativity and its social function in the UK.

Exploring the academic discourse of creativity: an examination of seven studies of creativity

The seven studies under consideration in this chapter include a test for scientific creativity (Hu & Adey, 2002); an experimental investigation into students' creativity in a computer-assisted learning process (Kozielska, 2004); a study of employee creativity (Oldham & Cummings, 1996); an analysis of moral creativity and education for citizenship (Haste, 1993); an investigation into the relationship between creativity and time management (Zampetakis *et al*, 2010); a meta-analysis of personality in scientific and artistic creativity (Feist, 1998), and a dimensional analysis of creativity and mental illness (Silvia & Kimbrel, 2010). The varied focus of these studies immediately raises the question, are these researchers discussing the *same* construct? Perhaps surprisingly, given the diversity of their enquiries, the researchers do offer similar definitions of creativity, which they validate through an appeal to extant literature. For example:

As pointed out by Woodman (1981), creativity has been a topic of thought for just about every major personality theorist in the 20th century: Freud, Jung, Rank, Fromm, Maslow, Rogers, May, Kelly, Cattell, Eysenck, and even Skinner wrote about creativity... It is easy to see why originality per se is not sufficient – there would be no way to distinguish eccentric or schizophrenic thought from creative thought. To be classified as *creative*, thought or behaviour must also be socially useful or adaptive. (Feist, 1998: 290; italics in original)

Creativity takes place during the creation of something that did not exist before...Literature on the subject gives many interpretations and definitions of creativity understood as solving problems. (Kozielska, 2004: 280)

When employees perform creatively, they suggest novel and useful products, ideas or procedures that provide an organization with important raw material for subsequent development and possible implementation (Amabile, 1983, 1988; Straw, 1990; Woodman, Sawyer & Griffin, 1993). (Oldham & Cummings, 1996: 607)

Across the sample, the researchers appear to agree that creativity has something to do with thoughts and/or behaviours that are both novel and useful. Notwithstanding the homogeneity of the researchers' definition of creativity, there

is manifest disagreement over whether or not consensus over creativity has, in fact, been achieved:

Novices to the study of creativity are often surprised when told that for the last 30 years or more, creativity researchers have been nearly unanimous in their definition of the concept (e.g., Amabile, 1996, Feist, 1993; Guilford, 1950; MacKinnon, 1970; Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976; Simonton, 1988; Sternberg, 1988): *Creative thought or behaviour* must be both novel-original and useful-adaptive.(Feist, 1998: 290; italics in original)

The concept of creativity has proven over the years to be an elusive one to define. As early as 1960, Rapucci (quoted by Welsch 1981) counted between 50 and 60 definitions in the literature on creativity. Twenty years later, an extensive review forced Welch (1981) to conclude that the literature contains such a variance of definitional statements that the task of arriving at an integrated and agreed definition is virtually impossible. (Hu & Adey, 2002: 390)

Researchers, it seems, have paradoxically reached consensus over the definition of creativity and failed to resolve that definition.

Disagreement between academics over what constitutes creativity may stem from the ease with which the basic construct of creativity (i.e. novel and useful thoughts/behaviours) can be mutated through the use of an adjective. For example, Hu and Adey (2002) write about ‘scientific creativity’, and Haste (1993) writes about ‘moral creativity’. The use of an adjective effectively generates a new construct, and the authors of a new construct must therefore advance a conceptual apparatus which appeals to the ‘intuitions; instincts; values; desires, and the possibilities’ (Harvey, 2009: 5) inherent in the pre-existing world of creativity research in order to *embed* that new construct. This process requires the boundaries of the basic definition of creativity to be pushed; hence the instability of the definition of creativity. For example, having introduced the notion of ‘moral creativity’, Haste (1993:154) prompts her readers to examine their own definition of the moral domain:

Are we talking about the extremes, the Gandhis and the Mother Teresas, or are we including also those who are talented and innovative – either consistently over time, or maybe even on just one significant occasion? (Haste, 1993: 154)

In raising this question, Haste attempts to draw an association between recognised exemplars of “goodness” (Gandhi and Mother Teresa) and the popular notion of creativity (i.e. novel and useful thoughts/behaviours) in order to make ‘moral

creativity’ resonate with her readers’ pre-existing values and beliefs. In so doing, the original definition of creativity mutates to accommodate the idea of morality. As with the other studies in this sample, Haste accompanies her definition of creativity with an extensive literature review, which serves to demonstrate that the ideas expressed in her paper are not eccentric, but are the reasonable extension of ideas hitherto endorsed by her academic audience. This finding is consistent with Williams’ (2000: 40) observation that researchers are inclined to base their hypotheses on theories with ‘a good track record of success’ to justify their studies to peers who will review them.

The appeal to existing values and beliefs within the academic community is not confined to the promotion of new definitions of creativity: some researchers employ this tactic to persuade their readers to adopt a particular outlook on creativity. For example, Silvia and Kimbrel (2010: 2) acknowledge that the alleged link between creativity and mental illness is ‘one of the most controversial topics in modern creativity research’, and commence their enquiry into this phenomenon by appealing to their readers’ existing sympathies:

Asking whether creativity is linked to mental illness is like asking whether there is a dog breed that fits your personality or whether there is a journal that will publish your dissertation study – the sheer number of possibilities makes us reluctant to simply say *no*. (Silvia & Kimbrel, 2010: 2, italics in original)

By appealing to both a prosaic “truth” (i.e. there are many breeds of dogs) and a “truth” that is linked to the hopes and fears of their academic audience (i.e. there are many journals that may/may not publish your thesis), Silvia and Kimbrel try to make their controversial enquiry mesh with their readers’ sense of what is both credible and fair. Again, the use of an extensive literature review enables the authors to reassure their readers that their ideas about creativity are not idiosyncratic or untrustworthy.

The researchers in this sample do not seek merely to assuage their fellow academics’ doubts over their definition of, or stance towards, creativity: equally, they endeavour to make their enquiries resonate with “real-world” problems, and establish a platform for the deployment of their ideas by non-academics, such as business managers; health professionals and teachers. For example:

Researchers have paid scant attention to the relationship between individual creativity and individual time management practices. Considering the importance of creativity and time management, the gap in the research and literature on the relationship between individual creativity and time management practices forms a notable deficiency. (Zampetakis *et al*, 2010: 24)

Unfortunately, little is known about the conditions that promote the creative performance of individual employees in organizations. Although numerous studies have attempted to identify the personal characteristics of individuals that predict creative accomplishment (Barron & Harrington, 1981), little of this research has focused on creative achievements in work settings. (Oldham & Cummings, 1996: 607)

Having identified a pressing issue, some of the authors in this sample recommend a specific procedure, validated through their enquiry, which might be usefully adopted in a real-world context. For example:

Observations made during classes showed that students in experimental groups in which computer programs were used solved problems with unconventional methods more often...They used their creativity, which was less often observed in students who worked without computer assistance. It can be assumed that computer programs allow demonstration of correlations between pieces of information which seem to be distant and poorly associated. This enables the training of students in creative thinking. (Kozielska, 2004: 285)

Our results have some interesting practical implications. First, although individual creativity relates to autonomy (Dewett, 2007; Oldham & Cummings, 1996), it is possible that such autonomy may be meaningless if individuals did not also have the freedom to choose which task to plan and schedule...Next, our results implicitly confirm the idea that supervisors' (teacher's) planning skills are an important influence on the work of people high in creativity (Mumford, 2000). Supervisors that are responsible for long-term projects should do substantial planning beforehand and avoid assigning individuals high in creativity, tasks that are not intriguing and motivating. (Zampetakis *et al*, 2010: 30)

In the above quotations, the researchers employ emotive language to locate creativity within the contexts of education and business: for example, 'unconventional'; 'autonomy'; 'freedom'; 'skills'; 'substantial'; 'intriguing'; 'motivating'. This language matches the agreed definition of creativity as thoughts/behaviours that are both novel and useful, and by using highly-charged language to discuss an apparent *improvement* in the performance of students and employees, the researchers are able to lend a sense of urgency to the development of individuals' creativity, and to recruit the general public's support for this

endeavour by connecting their ideas about creativity to the values, beliefs and desires of *non-academics* within the social nexus.

Although some academics offer concrete advice pertaining to creativity that might be applied in real-world contexts, other researchers prefer instead to offer conclusions that are non-didactic, which suggests that it is not considered mandatory for creativity researchers to posit their enquiries as a “call to arms” for real-world action. For example:

It is safe to say that in general a “creative personality” does exist and personality dispositions do regularly and predictably relate to creative achievement in art and science. (Feist, 1998: 304)

It seems unlikely, based on our findings, that the dimensions of depression, anxiety, and social anxiety have strong relationships with dimensions of creativity. (Silvia and Kimbrel, 2010: 8)

To effect both citizenship and moral creativity, we must confront the darker side of the system, and the darker side of the self. (Haste, 1993: 163)

Although we might observe a tension between the researchers’ respective findings, with the first paper arguing that personality dispositions relate to creative achievement; the second paper arguing that they do not, and the third paper arguing that they might, the purpose of these non-didactic enquiries is, arguably, not to establish *consensus* but to expand the possibilities of creativity research by maintaining the discourse of creativity to which other researchers might tether the rationale of their own enquiries. For example:

One purpose of this meta-analysis was to provide the raw material – the empirical consensus – so that future researchers can make educated guesses as to where to begin their search for the potential underlying physiological and psychological mechanisms of highly creative behaviour. (Feist, 1998: 304-305)

Researchers put forward their studies as a conceptual apparatus for future researchers, and pass on the “baton of enquiry”. In the research “relay race” it would be counter-productive for academics to pin down the meaning of creativity, since this would remove the need for future enquiry and would close the event. In their exploration of the transmission of ideas, Bettencourt *et al* (2006) found that in order for an idea to spread, it must be novel: when an idea is communicated between individuals who are already familiar with that idea, transmission ceases. The enduring popularity of creativity research arguably bears witness to the

inventiveness of researchers and their tendency to avoid offering “the last word” on creativity: while Derrida (1967/1974) discusses the inevitability of the deferral of meaning of social phenomena, in this instance, the deferral of meaning appears to be intentional.

Discussion

The studies of creativity examined in this chapter indicate that:

- In spite of the absence of a clear and settled definition of creativity, creativity has become a common denominator in international academic debate about issues as diverse as mental illness and business performance.
- The academic discourse of creativity is receptive to both the novel application of existing ideas about creativity and the formulation of new ideas.
- Creativity studies may produce findings that have a real-world application in a given context.
- Creativity studies may produce findings that are non-didactic.

In order to consider how academic research into creativity has helped provide an anchor for Creative Partnerships in the form of a discourse of creativity to which the NACCCE’s (1999) definition of creativity might be tethered, it is necessary to compare the NACCCE report with the academic discourse.

The NACCCE’s (1999: 18-23) definition of creativity is informed by what it identifies as the four challenges facing education in the UK: ‘The Economic Challenge’; ‘The Technological Challenge’; ‘The Social Challenge’, and ‘The Personal Challenge’. It is evident that all of the claims made by the NACCCE report under these headings resonate with the academic discourse of creativity identified in this chapter. For example, we might compare the NACCCE’s view on education with that expressed by Kozielska (2004) in her study of creativity in a computer-assisted learning process:

...the growing demand in businesses world-wide is for forms of education and training that develop ‘human resources’ and in particular the powers of communication, innovation and creativity. (NACCCE, 1999: 19)

In the market economy, university graduates are more and more often required to possess such qualities as: activity, initiative, flexibility,

motivation, readiness to solve problems and make decisions. (Kozielska, 2004: 279)

We might also compare the NACCCE's views on the individual with those expressed by Feist (1998) in his meta-analysis of personality in scientific and artistic creativity:

Highly creative people in any field are often driven by a strong self-belief in their abilities in that field. Having a positive self-image as a creative person can be fundamental to developing creative performance. (NACCCE, 1999: 90)

The most striking outcome of the meta-analysis was that regardless of which measure or taxonomy was used to assess personality or creativity, a consistent and clear portrait of the creative personality in science and art has emerged: Creative people are more autonomous, introverted, open to new experiences, norm-doubting, self-confident, self-accepting, driven, ambitious, dominant, hostile and impulsive. (Feist, 1998: 299)

Finally, we might compare the NACCCE's views on society with those expressed by Haste (1993) in her study of moral creativity:

The rising tide of drug use, of gang culture and street violence is harsh evidence of the pressures and tensions that young people face. A growing number are less and less convinced of the value of education itself. Truancy and disaffection still affect the minority of pupils: but it is a significant problem. (NACCCE, 1999: 23)

Various studies show that a high stage of reasoning does predict prosocial or socially-concerned action. Furthermore, perceiving the situation as having moral connotations, or connotations of personal responsibility, seems to depend on moral stage, with lower-stage reasoners perceiving neither a moral dimension nor any personal responsibility to become involved. (Haste, 1993: 154-155)

It is evident that the authors of the NACCCE report and the academic researchers in the sample do not express identical views on education and society: for example, the NACCCE report paints a grim picture of the UK's moral landscape, while Haste offers a more positive vision. What is significant is not the extent to which the NACCCE report and creativity researchers think alike, but the extent to which the NACCCE report and the authors in this sample share an unspoken conviction that creativity is a *panacea* for social issues as disparate as business performance and youth disaffection. No doubt it would be possible to dissect the NACCCE report and, line-by-line, find its philosophical counterpart in the world of academic research into creativity, but this task is not necessary. It is, arguably, the *form* of the academic discourse of creativity, as well as its *content*, that

supports and embeds the NACCCE's construct of creativity, as utilised in Creative Partnerships: in exploring the *modus operandi* of creativity research, this chapter has demonstrated that academic research takes place in an academic culture in which the validity of claims about creativity are established by acknowledging one's intellectual predecessors, and in which pragmatic outcomes for real-world contexts are not necessary, so long as one proffers research ideas for fellow academics that help perpetuate academic research. It is arguably this culture that permitted the NACCCE to concoct "creativity" from multiple academic sources and to make un-interrogated claims about creativity that are embedded in an academic discourse that is, itself, quite happy to leave unanswered the question, 'What is the purpose of the discourse of creativity?'

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that academics have turned a blind eye to the NACCCE's construction of creativity. For example, Banaji observes that:

The NACCCE report is implicitly suggesting that the preparatory and exploratory time in art, media, technology and drama classrooms and projects is only valuable insofar as it contributes to the final product or to the reinsertion of 'excluded' youth' into the official school system. (Banaji, 2009: 152)

Although Banaji takes issue with the instrumental basis of the NACCCE report's account of creativity, the examination of the studies of creativity in this chapter demonstrates that creativity is *often* viewed as a means, rather than an end, by academic researchers, who evaluate creativity in terms of its contribution to issues such as time management (for example, Zampetakis *et al*, 2010) or business performance (for example, Oldham & Cummings, 1996).

Other academics take issue with the NACCCE report over what it *omits*, rather than what it contains: for example, Buckingham and Jones (2001: 11) criticise the fact that the NACCCE report makes 'little recognition of the *politics* of culture', but again the de-contextualisation of creativity is commonplace in creativity research. For example, in his meta-analysis of personality in scientific and artistic creativity, Feist (1998) considers the creation of art as though it took place in a vacuum, untouched by politics, economics and social mores, stating:

Granted, some art can be rather derivative and somewhat technical, yet anyone who makes a living at art has to be more than one step above a technician...there is no institutional support for relatively noncreative art. (Feist, 1998: 291)

Given that academic researchers do not feel obliged to produce findings with a real-world application, the absence of a real-world context for their enquiries is perhaps not surprising, and the NACCCE report, in obfuscating the politics of culture, was arguably tethering its construct of creativity to a sympathetic discourse.

Conclusion

This chapter began by discussing the NACCCE report's construct of creativity in relation to three claims: first, that in order for an idea to become popular it must resonate with individuals' pre-existing values, beliefs and desires; second, that an idea is transmitted, person-to-person, until everyone within a community is "infected", and third, that a popular idea is politically valuable. As stated previously, the abundance of books on creativity in the UK is indicative of the popularity of creativity, and indeed Schlesinger (2007: 387) observes that it is 'exceedingly difficult to escape the tentacular embrace' of the 'doctrine' of creativity. We may therefore assume that the UK population has succumbed to creativity, and given that some of the popular texts on creativity mentioned earlier were written by academics, we may also assume that academics have played a key role in this intellectual infection. By looking at a sample of creativity studies, it is apparent that academics discuss phenomena which hold interest for the general public (such as education; employment; mental health and morality), and it is therefore likely that researchers' ideas about creativity have been accepted largely because they resonate with the public's beliefs about the challenges and opportunities within our society (Harvey, 2009). What is perhaps surprising is that, despite its ubiquity, creativity remains a nebulous concept. According to Banaji:

The public discourse on creativity is characterised by a lack of clarity that allows participants to gain the benefits of aligning themselves with conflicting or mutually incompatible ideas and views without being seen to do so. (Banaji, 2009: 161)

As has been shown, the culture of academic research has enabled the perpetuation of a discourse of creativity that abounds in conflicting and unresolved ideas about creativity that are nevertheless tethered to beliefs and values existing in the social

nexus, and as noted by Banaji, “creativity” may be conveniently invoked by politicians to garner support for their policy, regardless of the logic of that invocation.

Schlesinger (2007: 377) has spoken out against the political mania for creativity, which he identifies as a ‘hegemonic term in an increasingly elaborated framework of policy ideas’, and the academic discourse of creativity has arguably enabled politicians to mobilise a noun that resonates with the public’s beliefs, values and desires to develop a raft of policy including education. In the document that unveiled Creative Partnerships, *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years*, Prime Minister Tony Blair (2001: 3) proclaimed that ‘the arts and creativity set us free’, and Culture Secretary Chris Smith (2001: 5) argued that creativity is key to ‘individuals’ well-being and sense of fulfilment’. On the face of it, these claims are indefensible, and yet in making these claims Blair and Smith were not simply pushing an eccentric agenda for Creative Partnerships inspired by Third Way thinking: they were appealing to popular ideas about creativity already embedded in the social nexus in the same way that academics appeal to popular ideas about creativity already embedded in the world of academic research, and the fact that the political rhetoric of creativity was not lampooned indicates that the appeal was successful. The NACCCE report’s construction of “creativity” as the amalgamation of democratic notions of creative behaviour, Romanticism and postmodernism, may have dovetailed nicely with New Labour’s political vision (discussed in Chapter Four), but the construct was derived from an academic discourse that appealed to the beliefs, values and desires of individuals within our society, and ultimately it is *this* discourse, rather than the political rhetoric of figures such as Blair and Smith, that empowers Creative Partnerships, by providing an anchor for the institution’s socio-political rationale.

In the following chapter, the economic rationale of Creative Partnerships is examined, and the political utility of the embedded construct of creativity is made apparent.

Chapter Four

Creative Partnerships and the Third Way

This chapter outlines the emergence of neoliberalism and educational ‘new interventionism’, in order to understand the economic rationale of Creative Partnerships.

Introduction

During the US presidential election campaign of 1992, Bill Clinton employed the catchphrase ‘It’s the economy, stupid’. During the UK election campaign of 1997, Tony Blair’s motto was ‘Education, education, education’. At first glance these two political slogans have little in common, but when Blair’s motto is considered in conjunction with his previous claim that ‘Education is the best economic policy that we have’ (Blair, 1995 in Barber, 1997: 46), their similarity is apparent. The idea that there is a connection between education and economic success is, of course, longstanding. For example, in 1882 Sir Bernhard Samuelson proclaimed that ‘an extended and systematic education system’ is a ‘necessary preliminary to the fullest development of industry’ (in Sanderson, 1999:1). However, what this chapter hopes to demonstrate is that, under neoliberalism (and more latterly the Third Way) the experiential learning offered by programmes such as Creative Partnerships has come to be seen, not so much as a means of developing industry, as an economic practice in its own right: government intervention in education has become an economic activity that stands in lieu of direct intervention in the market. The aim of this chapter, then, is to offer a critique of successive governments’ ideas about education and the economy from 1979 to the present day, in order to develop an understanding of the economic rationale of Creative Partnerships, and to thus make sense of the political belief that Creative Partnerships might contribute to the nation’s economic prosperity (DCMS, 2001: 5).

The purpose of the previous chapter, *Creativity and the Academy*, was to demonstrate that the power of an idea is dependent upon the appeal that it makes to the intuitions; instincts; values; desires and beliefs within the social nexus (Harvey, 2009: 5). Examining the noun “creativity”, the previous chapter

demonstrated that the government's account of creativity was based upon the NACCCE report's account of creativity, which gained its credibility from the academic discourse of creativity, which was in turn underpinned by an appeal to real-world issues dear to the heart of the public, both here and abroad, such as education, employment and health. As indicated previously, this "chain of beliefs", from the political elite down to the man and woman on the street, needs to be secure if politicians are to make political headway with terms such as "creativity". Indeed, ideas such as "creativity" *must* appeal to the values, desires and beliefs already in existence in the social nexus in order to have currency. History has shown that if politicians *do* attempt to present ideas that are external to the social nexus' values and desires, then these ideas fall upon stony ground (see for example, Margaret Thatcher's poll tax). Thus, while the aim of this present chapter is to critique the economic rationale of Creative Partnerships, it should be born in mind that *we*, as the social nexus, provided the climate of consent that enabled the NACCCE report's definition of creativity to function, and that *we*, as the social nexus, gave potency to the idea that schemes such as Creative Partnerships can stimulate economic growth and cancel out the pernicious effects of long-term unemployment in deprived communities.

This chapter begins with an outline of the emergence of neoliberalism in 1979. It traces the development of neoliberalism into the present day, paying particular attention to how educational policy has been utilised to further the neoliberal agenda. It considers Creative Partnerships' role in the Third Way economic vision, and concludes with a consideration of the success of educational new interventionism under the banner of creativity.

Neoliberalism

Palley (2005: 24) identifies the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 as the starting point for the formal period of neoliberal economic policy domination in the UK. The basic tenets of neoliberal theory are: first, that direct interventions by governments to increase employment are harmful, because they either cause inflation or raise unemployment by destabilising the market process, and should therefore be avoided (Palley, 2005: 23) and second, that publicly owned assets should be privatised (Arestis & Sawyer, 2005: 199). While the overt aim of

neoliberalism under Thatcher was to invigorate Britain's stagnant economy, Harvey (2009: 201) reveals that its underlying agenda was to restore power to the 'elite class', whose interests had been thwarted by socialism, and that this agenda was concealed beneath an appeal to individual freedom and the denigration of the "nanny state". Thus, against a backdrop of inflation and unemployment, Margaret Thatcher preached a 'new discipline of labour' (Duménil & Lévy, 2005:11), which required the British public to accept the notion that deregulation is synonymous with emancipation, and to stand aside while the government dismantled the mechanisms for their protection, such as trade unions, and sold off publicly owned assets, such as telecommunications (Arestis & Sawyer, 2005: 199). Conservative politicians attempted to reconcile the British public to this brave new world by casting the nation as a sick patient in need of bitter medicine (Charteris-Black 2005), but in spite of the promotion of a "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger" mentality, by the mid-1980s it was apparent that Thatcher's monetarist policies had actually worsened the economic crisis in the UK and created even higher unemployment (Lapavistas, 2005: 34).

New Interventionism

In the face of economic calamity, the British government stuck fast to its policy of non-intervention in the economy, and instead of returning to Keynesianism it considered how the social norms underpinning capitalist economic activity might be manipulated or strengthened through social policy in order to improve the UK's economic efficiency (Lapavistas, 2005: 37). A 'new interventionism' therefore emerged within mainstream economics, which focussed on 'market-friendly government action' to ameliorate market imperfections (Lapavistas, 2005: 37). Politicians duly seized upon education as a means to promote the idea that the individual's willingness to re-skill him/herself according to the fluctuating needs of the market might result in personal success (Levidow, 2005: 159), and in 1988 the Conservative government introduced the Education Reform Act (ERA). The ERA advanced the neoliberals' agenda in two ways: first, it forced LEAs to delegate over 85% of funding to individual schools on the basis, primarily, of pupil numbers. This move encouraged schools to compete with one another to recruit pupils, and thereby contributed to the government's programme of

marketisation. Second, it established the National Curriculum, which enabled the government to exercise more control over what was being taught in schools. The aim of the National Curriculum was to offer pupils an education that:

...promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. (ERA, 1988: 1.2)

As discussed in Chapter One, the National Curriculum enshrined such things as the teaching of Shakespeare, and its cultural vision appears to have been informed by what Fairfield (2009: 246) identifies as the guiding themes of neoliberalism, namely ‘capitalism, Judeo-Christian morality and a decidedly dated form of individualism’, and indeed its cultural outlook was reminiscent of Matthew Arnold’s (1869) national cultural unity (see Chapter One). Given that the National Curriculum was arguably an attempt by Thatcher to stabilise British culture during a period of socio-economic turmoil (Ward & Connolly, 2008), we might suppose that the neoliberal vision of education was anti-progressive; a conjecture that appears to be verified by John Major’s (1991) assertion that ‘The progressive theorists have had their say, and they have had their day.’ However, as discussed in Chapter One, the neoliberals’ desire to promote self-efficacy in the face of economic upheaval meant that the introduction of the National Curriculum was preceded by a raft of what might be termed progressive educational initiatives, such as the TVEI, which complicates the picture of neoliberal education: on the one hand, the Conservative government championed humanism, and on the other hand it made tacit recognition the value of progressivism. Although humanism and progressivism are antithetical paradigms, it is possible to discern *why* progressivism was appealing to neoliberals: at the pragmatic level, Dewey’s (1916/1952) claim that experiential knowledge enables the *individual* to become autonomous was useful to politicians who wanted to posit enterprise and material success as the product of the individual’s adaptation to his/her environment, and this model of education thereby absolved the government of responsibility for mass unemployment and social disaffection; phenomena that now blighted the post-industrial regions of England laid waste through Thatcher’s economic policy (Simon, 1999). At the philosophical level, certain aspects of progressivism

chimed with neoliberal sentiment, and Fairfield (2009) highlights in particular the political appeal of Dewey's criticism of 'formal analysis':

Formal analysis rejects experimental reasoning in favour of a top-down application of technical categories ranging from the Hobbesian to the Marxian, as if theoretical vocabularies of self-interest or class struggle allow for a simple filing of social phenomena into pigeonholes conceived in advance of enquiry into a given issue or that substitute for inquiry itself. Classifying social realities into conceptual structures originally formulated in an empirical spirit but that in time deteriorate into inflexible dogmas falls into the same error as all forms of rationalism: to separate reason from experience, theory from practice, and to denigrate the latter in favour of a conception of reason that is self-sufficient and requires no corroboration from experience. (Fairfield, 2009: 239)

Margaret Thatcher (1987/2009) famously proclaimed 'There is no such thing as society', and the progressive educationalists' assertion that top-down social categories should be rejected on the grounds that classifying social phenomena into conceptual structures divorces 'reason from experience' thus complemented the neoliberals' atomized view of society (as discussed in Chapter One). However, it should be noted that while neoliberal programmes such as the TVEI might be described as schooling 'in the spirit of Dewey', the socio-political agenda of such programmes is, in reality, out of kilter with Dewey's democratic vision (see Fairfield, 2009: 21).

Enterprise Education

Under the Conservatives, certain 'Deweyan themes' (Fairfield, 2009: 21) were married to the neoliberal fascination with market forces to produce "enterprise education". According to Harvey (2009: 76), one of Thatcher's 'strong ideas' was to forge an alliance between businesses and state actors, and state schools were duly encouraged to form links with businesses in order for pupils to gain hands-on experience of the free market economy. The guiding principle of enterprise education was the notion that adaptation is synonymous with economic self-efficacy, and justification for this belief was provided by research coming out of the USA around this time, which allegedly demonstrated that individuals who cultivate their thinking skills are able to thrive in the modern capitalist state. For

example, in 1996 Robert Sternberg, the award-winning scientist and Yale Professor, proclaimed:

Successfully intelligent people are self-efficacious. They have a can-do attitude. They realize that the limits to what they can accomplish are often in what they tell themselves they cannot do, rather than in what they really cannot do. (Sternberg, 1996: 20)

Sternberg's theory makes no allowance for the economic reality of the environment in which individuals are situated, yet the idea that it is unequivocally wise and just to teach pupils the alleged thinking skills that underpin adaptation gained currency in the UK: for example, in 1993 Allan Gibb, Professor Emeritus of Small Business Management at Durham University, praised school and business partnerships and credited enterprise education with helping pupils to develop 'certain enterprising behaviours; skills and attributes associated with self-reliance' (Gibb, 1993: 11).

New Labour

In spite of the Conservative's promotion of an economic 'can-do attitude', by the early 1990s it was apparent that neoliberal economic policy had failed to prevent the UK from sliding once again into recession. This time around, the public's growing awareness of globalisation compounded the sense that job security was an outmoded fantasy; a disturbing situation summed up by Peter Hall, of the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London:

British city economies are in structural crisis and the recession of the 1990s has exposed the fact that the crisis is even deeper than once supposed; it affects not only the manufacturing sector, long seen as a source of weakness, but also whole swathes of the producer services. Hardly any part of the urban economy, any more, is completely free from the threat of overseas competition and offshoring. Business services and software, just as much as engineering, can be relocated in South India or the Pearl River Delta. (Hall, 1995: 7)

In 1997 New Labour won a landslide election victory, ending 18 years of Conservative government, yet in spite of New Labour's mandate for change, the party's education policy revealed a tacit commitment to neoliberalism in the face of globalisation. At the Labour Party Conference in 1995, Tony Blair declared that 'Education is the best economic policy that we have' (in Barber, 1997: 46),

and it quickly became apparent that, as Prime Minister, Blair intended to address Britain's economic difficulties, not by reversing Thatcherism, but by holding fast to the Conservative's policy of new interventionism. For example, in its first White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE, 1997: 61), New Labour praised enterprise education, stating, 'We want key players in each area to take stock of local partnership arrangements, and consider what action can be taken to ensure sustained momentum for school business links'.

The Third Way

Despite expressing overt support for aspects of neoliberal policy, New Labour declared an allegiance to 'Third Way' economics, which it identified as a middle ground between free market ideology and social democracy (Arestis & Sawyer, 2005: 177). New Labour espoused a relatively free-market, pro-City stance, epitomised by a 'light-touch' financial regime (Tett, 2009: 281), yet maintained that the state must play a role in ensuring individuals' equality of opportunity and equality of outcome (Arestis & Sawyer, 2005: 180), and the Third Way has consequently been described as 'neoliberalism with a human face' and 'new Keynesian' (Arestis & Sawyer, 2005: 177-178). As stated previously, New Labour came to power against a backdrop of concern over economic instability in the face of globalisation, but unlike previous Labour governments, New Labour did not believe that the government's role is to address unemployment through the nationalisation of struggling industries. Indeed, New Labour subscribed to the belief that an independent, national economic policy is impossible, due to the mobility of industrial and financial capital in the global marketplace, and that it is incumbent upon politicians to create a favourable environment for transnational investment, whether through offering low taxation on profits, subsidies to inward investment or by creating a highly skilled workforce (Arestis & Sawyer, 2005: 181). Thus, education was, for New Labour, not only socially important (because it ensured equality of opportunity), but economically important, since it was the 'best economic policy' available to a government committed to economic non-intervention (Blair, 1995 in Barber, 1997: 46).

The Rhetoric of Creativity

New Labour was shaping its political vision for the UK at a time when creativity was a “buzz word”, and an enthusiasm for creativity is evident in the party’s pre-election manifesto of 1997, in which it claimed: ‘We must build on the British qualities of inventiveness, creativity and adaptability’ (*Labour Party Manifesto*, 1997). Once in office, Peter Mandelson, Trade and Industry Secretary, declared:

We want a society that celebrates and values its business heroes as much as it does its pop stars and footballers. So we must remove the barriers to enterprise in this country, reward risk-taking, and encourage innovation and creativity. (Mandelson 1998, in Elliot & Atkinson, 2007: 47)

The political fascination with creativity was grounded in the international debate surrounding the changing structure of the workplace that was taking place during the 1990s. In this debate, the ability to think creatively and solve problems was posited as fundamental to economic success in an increasingly competitive global marketplace (Craft, 2005). For example, reports such as *The creative city* by Landry and Bianchini (1995) popularised the notion that creative communities are socially and economically strong, while books such as *Successful Intelligence* by Robert Sternberg (1996) spread the idea that creative intelligence is synonymous with self-efficacy. According to Jones (2003: 164), the widespread belief that creativity is an essential element of business was a ‘striking phenomenon of the later 1990s’, and the mantra that creativity enhances economic performance appeared to be verified by the relative success enjoyed in the UK at this time by creative businesses engaged in a range of diverse activities that included such things as advertising and computer services (UK Trade & Investment, 2007). According to O’Connor (2006), the fragmentation and deregulation of Britain’s post-industrial labour market meant that, whilst traditional industry was in decline, ‘creative industries’ were thriving due to the dense clustering of micro-businesses, the mobility of their workforce, and high levels of self-employment. New Labour’s depth of commitment to the creative industries was proven by Tony Blair’s decision to instruct the DCMS to set up the Creative Industries Task Force immediately after the 1997 election. The purpose of the task force was to increase national awareness of the importance of the creative industries (DCMS, 2002), and in its ensuing report, *Creative Industries Fact File*, ‘Education and

Skills’ is presented as a distinct core theme. Under this heading, the report details a number of initiatives designed to link education with the creative industries, including the soon-to-be implemented programme, Creative Partnerships (DCMS, 2002: 37-38).

New interventionism under the banner of creativity was ingenious: creativity sounded egalitarian (it chimed with Andy Warhol’s (1987) claim that ‘an artist is anybody who does something well, like if you cook well’), logical (it supported the promotion of the creative industries), and trendy (it complemented the image of “Cool Britannia”). New Labour’s use of the word “creativity” also communicated the message that the party was a powerful force for social change: according to the linguist Charteris-Black (2005: 156), ‘Reifications from the source domain of creation, construction and life highlight creative processes, or swift and decisive action’. Charteris-Black (2005: 156) notes that Tony Blair employed a *good governing is creating* conceptual metaphor, and that he used the word ‘create’ to praise a raft of policies initiated by New Labour: for example, Blair talked of New Labour having ‘created jobs’ and having ‘created the minimum wage’ (Blair, 2003 cited in Charteris-Black, 2005: 156). Under New Labour, reifications from the source domain of creation also served to highlight liberation: in the policy document that announced the launch of Creative Partnerships, Tony Blair (2001: 3) declared that ‘the arts and creativity set us free’ and he posited Creative Partnerships as a route to liberation from the social consequences of economic failure. In making this particular use of “creativity”, Blair was drawing upon the NACCCE (1999) report’s suggestion that arts-based initiatives can ‘mitigate the economic problems of changing patterns of work’ by ‘restoring confidence and community spirit through shared creative projects’ (NACCCE, 1999: 56). Although the NACCCE (1999: 23) report acknowledged that drug use, ‘gang culture’ and ‘street violence’ were largely the product of long-term unemployment, it nevertheless presented partnerships between artists and schools as an antidote to, and liberation from, social breakdown (see Chapter Five). Neelands and Choe (2010) identify a report, *The Creative Age*, by Seltzer and Bentley (1999), as equal in importance to the NACCCE report (1999) in terms of influencing New Labour’s thinking about creativity. In this report, Seltzer and Bentley draw upon the scientific definition of creativity as adaptation (see Chapter Two), and advocate the cultivation of a “creative outlook” whereby

individuals' misfortunes are reconceptualised as a source of strength, as in the following example:

...in one study of people who became severely handicapped by disease or accidents, a number of individuals were identified who had not only adapted well to their tragedy, but who felt that their lives had improved as a result of their loss. The distinguishing factor between these people and those who did not adapt so well to their circumstances was the fact that they chose to discipline their attention in such a way they were able to 'master their limitation'. They learned how to find enjoyment from some of the most basic activities, such as walking, dressing or driving a car. One even became a swimming instructor, another an archery champion who beat his opponents while confined to a wheelchair. (Seltzer & Bentley, 1999: 29)

The idea that a creative outlook enables disadvantaged people to 'discipline their attention' and 'beat' their opponents held appeal for politicians dedicated to new interventionism, since it raised the possibility that individuals living in impoverished communities in England might be empowered, through creative activities, to recognise that social and economic deprivation can be overcome through their own effort, and to 'take responsibility' for their lives (Jowell, 2002).

The Super Rich

As stated previously, New Labour believed that it was incumbent upon politicians to create a favourable environment for transnational investment by offering low taxation on profits and subsidies to inward investment (Arestis & Sawyer, 2005: 181), and this policy was pursued in tandem with the launch of initiatives such as Creative Partnerships. Harvey (2009) notes that the covert aim of neoliberalism is to concentrate wealth and power in the hands of the top 1% of society, and New Labour appeared to support this agenda by deciding, for example, to cut the tax that the owners of hedge-funds and private-equity firms pay when selling their assets from 40% to just 10% (Peston, 2008: 8); a policy which, amongst others, led to 'the triumph of the super rich' (Peston, 2008: 7). As a result, the gulf between the rich and poor in Britain steadily widened under New Labour, and in 2000-2001, a measure of income inequality known as the Gini coefficient reached a record high: according to this measure, the rich had never had been better off (Peston, 2008: 6). Although New Labour claimed to be committed to social justice (Blair in Dillow, 2007: 10), and used a great deal of the tax revenue generated by

the City boom to finance public spending in deprived regions and to enhance benefits for the less well-off (Peston, 2008: 345), in 2006 the Sutton Trust found that social mobility in the UK was lower than all other advanced nations for which there was comparable data (with the exception of the bastion of neoliberalism, the USA); a finding which prompted Sir Peter Lampl (2006), Chairman of the Sutton Trust, to remark that it is ‘appalling that young people’s life chances are still so tied to the fortunes of their parents.’ The social consequences of the UK wealth gap were examined in numerous studies: for example, in 2005 a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Palmer *et al*, 2005) found that the proportion of children living in workless UK households was the highest in Europe, and that unemployed people are three times more likely than average to be the victims of violent crime. In 2009 a report for The Children’s Society (Layard & Dunn, 2009: 132) found that children living in the UK’s bottom fifth income bracket experienced hunger; felt ‘shame and embarrassment’ over their clothing; led restricted lives due to the cost of public transport, and were at greater risk of developing mental health problems. Perhaps most worrying of all, in 2008 the World Health Organisation examined the impact of the UK wealth gap on children’s health, and worked out that a boy in the suburb of Calton, Glasgow, can expect to live 28 years less than one raised in Lenzie, 13 kilometres away, and that a boy born in Hampstead, London, will live around 11 years longer than a boy from St Pancras, five stops away on the Northern line of the underground (WHO, 2008).

The launch of Creative Partnerships

Creative Partnerships was one of a number of initiatives designed by New Labour to cancel out the pernicious effects of poverty identified above. Creative Partnerships was launched by the Culture Secretary, Tessa Jowell, at the conference on Arts and Young Offenders held in the Tate Modern in 2002. In her speech, Jowell referred to areas of England blighted by ‘social and cultural deprivation’ (Jowell, 2002; see Appendix B), and she presented Creative Partnerships as an initiative that would make young people living in these areas ‘take responsibility’ for their lives (Jowell, 2002). In this manner, Jowell shifted responsibility for social and economic regeneration from the government to

working class members of deprived communities, and Jowell's chosen method for the promotion of self-efficacy was unveiled to be Shakespeare's theatre and 'Billy Elliot-style ballet' (Jowell, 2002). Jowell highlighted the social benefits of the programme, claiming that 'music workshops, Shakespeare performances and dance classes can give young people an alternative to burglary, vandalism and violence' (Jowell, 2002), and Creative Partnerships was thus posited primarily as a vehicle for social and moral regeneration in Labour's heartland areas. It is apparent that, in launching Creative Partnerships, New Labour drew first and foremost on the NACCCE's (1999) claim that arts-based education can reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. However, in subsequent discussions of the programme, it was equally apparent that the government intended Creative Partnerships to enhance the employability of disadvantaged and disaffected young people, and to promote home-grown entrepreneurialism in areas of high unemployment. For example, Estelle Morris (2003), Education Secretary at the time of Creative Partnership's launch, claimed that Creative Partnerships could 'transform young people's aspirations' and that as a result some young people might 'go on to make their living from culture', while Creative Partnerships (2009 c) itself claimed that the programme gave pupils 'the kind of skills that employers really need'; improved pupils' 'employability', and broke 'the cycle of deprivation'.

The impact of Creative Partnerships

New Labour's agenda for Creative Partnerships was twofold: first, Creative Partnerships aimed to support the free market economy by cultivating key attributes in future employees, and second, it hoped to alleviate some of the social problems associated with long-term unemployment. Although it may be too early to identify the economic impact of Creative Partnerships, in 2006 a report by Burns Owens Partnerships Ltd found that Creative Partnerships had been successful in generating immediate employment opportunities for creative practitioners hired by the organisation, and in 2003 the information sheet from UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) indicated more broadly that New Labour had been successful in developing the "right" kind of workforce to attract transnational investment (although Creative Partnerships' contribution to this

situation was not identified). According to UKTI, ‘The UK has a highly flexible labour market, which enables foreign investors to use a great deal of flexibility in their employment and management of staff’ and that ‘UK law does not oblige employers to provide a written employment contract’ (UKTI 2003, cited in Arestis & Sawyer, 2005: 204). Notwithstanding the economic and social importance of jobs creation, we might share Harvey’s (2009) concern here over the government’s attempt to procure transnational investment by pitching the UK as a “sweatshop” of highly skilled, flexible workers.

It is perhaps more difficult to discern the success of Creative Partnerships’ agenda to alleviate social problems associated with economic deprivation, since it is difficult to quantify a programme’s emotional or moral impact. However, we might note that in 2007 the United Kingdom was accused of ‘failing its children’ after Unicef placed the UK bottom of a league table for child wellbeing in its first study of childhood in the world’s 21 richest nations (BBC, 2007). According to Unicef (2007), children growing up in the UK suffer greater deprivation, worse relationships with their parents, and are exposed to more risks from alcohol, drugs and unsafe sex than those in any other wealthy country. Al Aynsley Green (2007), the children’s commissioner for England, responded to the Unicef report by proclaiming that ‘There is a crisis at the heart of our society’, and this apparent crisis might lead us to question the success of policies that include Creative Partnerships; a programme which had promised to give the ‘have-nots’ (DCMS, 2001:11) an alternative to ‘burglary, vandalism and violence’, and bring hope to their lives (Jowell, 2002). Furthermore, Unicef’s discovery that more than 30% of the UK’s 15-19-year-olds were not in education and training and were not looking beyond low-skilled work appeared to undermine New Labour’s claim that schemes such as Creative Partnerships were cultivating a dynamic workforce.

Conclusion

In 2008, Britain faced ‘the mother of all crises’ (Harvey, 2010: 6) when reckless banking practices resulted in a stunning loss of around \$4,000 billion worldwide (Tett, 2009). The dramatic failure of Britain’s banking sector forced Prime Minister Gordon Brown (2010) to belatedly acknowledge that he should have put ‘the whole public interest’ ahead of the interests of the bankers during his period

as Chancellor, and in the political hand-wringing that accompanied the worst financial crisis since the end of the Second World War, Tony Blair's (2005) Prime Ministerial rage against the 'yobbish behaviour' of 'street-corner and shopping centre thugs' was redirected by Gordon Brown (2009) towards the 'unjustifiable and unacceptable greed' of the former boss of the Royal Bank of Scotland. In 2009, in what was seen by many as a case of "too little, too late", the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Alistair Darling, announced a one-off punitive tax of 50% on the bonuses of bankers (Elliot & Wintour, 2009). However, against a backdrop of escalating unemployment, it appeared that the British public would bear the brunt of the catastrophic outcome of neoliberal economic policy, while the financiers and bankers were left 'rolling in clover' (Harvey, 2010: 222); a conjecture that seemed to be confirmed by the discovery in 2010 that the super rich had grown a staggering 30% richer during the recession (Woods, 2010). Remarking on this finding, Philip Beresford, the compiler of the Sunday Times Rich List stated:

The rich have come through the recession with flying colours. The stock market is up, the hedge funds are coining it. The rich are doing very nicely. The rest of the country is going to have to face public spending cuts, but it has little effect on the rich because they don't consume public services. (Beresford, 2010)

Creative Partnerships' funding is in place until 2011. It is too early to say whether this scheme, along with many other public services, will be axed in order for the nation to pay off debts incurred by the super rich. It is equally difficult to predict how the public will feel about neoliberal claims made in support of Creative Partnerships, such as Tessa Jowell's (2002) assertion that it will help disadvantaged and disaffected youth 'take responsibility' for their lives, in the aftermath of a recession so patently generated by the machinations of the elite.

It may sound preposterous to link Creative Partnerships with the global economic crisis, and indeed New Labour's plan to let working class children go 'backstage at the theatre' or spend 'a day on a film set' (DCMS, 2001: 14; 18) is hardly equivalent to the deregulation of the financial sector. However, this chapter has aimed to demonstrate that educational programmes such as Creative Partnerships were initiated as part of Third Way new interventionism, and as such formed a triad with low taxation on profits and subsidies to inward investment (Arestis & Sawyer, 2005: 181). The economic and moral failure of these companion practices must surely lead us to question the rationale (if not the day-

to-day operation) of Creative Partnerships. If, as Tony Blair claimed, 'Education is the best economic policy that we have' (in Barber, 1997: 46), then the failure of the UK economy is the failure of our education policy.

In the following chapter, the relationship between Creative Partnerships and post-88 performativity is investigated.

Chapter Five

Creative Partnerships: Satisfaction and Denial

This chapter examines the origin of Creative Partnerships, in terms of who thought up the programme, and considers how the desires of the supporters of the arts in education, as expressed in the NACCCE (1999) report, were both satisfied and denied by New Labour through the establishment of Creative Partnerships.

Introduction

In February 1998, New Labour established the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) to make recommendations to the government on ‘the creative and cultural development of young people through formal and informal education’ (NACCCE, 1999: 4). The committee’s report - *All Our Futures* - was welcomed by many of the supporters of the arts in education who, like Beth Marshall (2001: 123), hailed it as ‘an excellent document’ that provided a ‘welcome antidote to the relentless utilitarianism of much of Labour’s policy’. In spite of the popularity of *All Our Futures*, New Labour decided to reject this ‘excellent’ document’s request for the creative arts to be given greater weight in the National Curriculum, and instead focussed on raising standards in schools. This decision resulted in widespread disappointment, and appeared to confirm that New Labour was *not* interested in the development of the individual child, but was instead committed to post-88 performativity, defined after Nixon (2004: 165) as the belief (enshrined in the 1988 Education Reform Act) that public trust is best gained through systems of accountability that support competition between schools, and that competition raises standards. The aim of this present chapter is to consider how, notwithstanding New Labour’s allegiance to post-88 performativity, the desire to broaden the provision of the arts in schools led supporters of the arts in education to join hands with New Labour to launch Creative Partnerships as the legitimate offspring of the NACCCE report.

This chapter begins by considering the background to the NACCCE report; offers a brief discussion of the report, and notes New Labour’s response. It then considers how the NACCCE report’s construct of creativity, which was

produced in order to support an appeal for curriculum reform, was used instead to create Creative Partnerships, and explores the common ground between the government and the supporters of the arts in education that made this possible. It then examines the role played by CAPE UK in providing a working model for the programme. This chapter draws attention to the faith, shared by supporters of the arts in education and New Labour, in the creed that ‘Creativity is good for the economy, good for the individual, good for society, and good for education’ (Jeffrey & Craft, 2001: 11). It argues that, as a result of this shared faith in creativity, Creative Partnerships’ educational agenda was passed off as ‘radical’ by the same government that resisted the recommendations of the NACCCE report, and embraced as ‘liberating’ by the same supporters of the arts in education who were disappointed by that resistance. This chapter concludes by exploring how Creative Partnerships, while appearing to be an antidote to post-88 performativity, in reality supports the standards agenda.

Background to All Our Futures (the NACCCE report)

The immediate trigger for the commissioning of the NACCCE report came not from New Labour, but from the eventual authors of the report. Mathilda Marie Joubert, Research Officer to the NACCCE, claims that three future NACCCE members (unidentified by Joubert) approached the newly elected government with ‘a proposal to investigate the opportunities for the promotion of creativity in the current education system’ (Joubert, 2001: 17). Whether or not he was a member of the trio that approached the government in 1997, Professor Ken Robinson of Warwick University had, for many years, been keen to raise the profile of the arts in education, and he accepted the position of Chair of the NACCCE. Previously, Robinson had been a major contributor to the Gulbenkian Foundation’s Report, *The Arts in Schools* (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF), 1982), which considered the place of the arts as part of the school curriculum, and it is helpful to consider this report in order to understand the genesis of many of the claims about creativity and the arts that were made in the subsequent NACCCE report. *The Arts in Schools* (CGF, 1982) was written against a backdrop of concern over the marginalisation of the arts in education. Economic recession and rising unemployment in the 1970s had provoked the ‘Great Debate’ about what schools

should be doing to address the nation's difficulties, and in his foreword to the 1989 edition of *The Arts in Schools*, Robinson explains how this debate had resulted in decreased provision for the arts:

In the terms of the Great Debate the arts were at risk from two misconceptions. First, to those who argued that the main role of education is to prepare young people for work, arts education evidently seemed unnecessary except for those looking for arts jobs. Second, through the emphasis in some teaching on creativity, self-expression and personal development, the arts had become associated with non-intellectual activities, and therefore seemed to lie outside the priorities of those who argued for a return to 'traditional' academic values. (Robinson, 1989: ii)

The Arts in Schools set out to address the above 'misconceptions'. First, in the face of dwindling employment prospects, the report argued that while the 'arts are not a palliative for unemployment', they inspire 'a sense of excellence and quality that can transform an individual's expectations of him/herself', and that the arts can thus develop pupils' 'capacity for autonomous choice so that they can, of their own free will and informed judgement, decide on what a worthwhile life for them will be' (CGF, 1982: 26-27). Second, *The Arts in Schools* drew upon research into psychology to argue that artistic activity is not a "non-intellectual" activity, but is one 'mode of thought and action' among many different modes, and that 'there are no grounds for the elevation of, for example, the sciences over the arts either in the policies or the planning of the school curriculum' (CGF, 1982: 35). In this manner, the *The Arts in Schools* endeavoured to show that the arts are fundamental to both a well-rounded education (because they develop the wide range of pupils' abilities), and to a socially relevant education (because they inculcate a sense of self-efficacy during uncertain economic times).

According to Robinson (1989: xi), *The Arts in Schools* enjoyed 'an unusual success' and stimulated a wide variety of practical projects. Notwithstanding this success, under the National Curriculum of 1988, mathematics, science and English (including literature and drama) were identified by the government as core subjects, while art and music were identified as mere foundation subjects. Robinson (1989: xv) spoke out against this division of the arts, claiming that music, dance, drama, visual arts and verbal arts 'share similar processes and fulfil related roles in education' and that therefore the arts, like science, should be planned for as a generic area of the curriculum. Nevertheless, during the 1990s the

arts continued to be split into core (compulsory) and foundation (non-compulsory) subjects.

New Labour: New Chance

New Labour's election victory of 1997 presented a fresh opportunity for artists and educators to lobby for the arts to be given greater priority in education, and when presented with an opportunity to produce a report for the government on the creative and cultural development of young people, the authors of the NACCCE report simply reiterated many of the claims made previously in *The Arts in Schools*. For example, the NACCCE report (1999: 13) claimed that 'Ability comes in many forms and should not be defined only by traditional academic criteria', and referenced Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences in support of this claim, in an apparent echo of the 'multiple modes of thought and action' discussed in *The Arts in Schools*. This theory of multiple intelligences was used to justify the claim that arts education enhances learning across the curriculum, since creativity is not unique to the arts but is a mode of thought that is 'equally fundamental to advances in the sciences, in mathematics, technology, in politics, business and in all areas of everyday life' (NACCCE, 1999: 27). Notwithstanding this claim, the NACCCE report made a special case for the value of the arts in education, rather than creativity *per se*. For example, when discussing literacy and numeracy it states:

Using words and numbers are among the highest achievements of human intelligence, but if it were limited to these, most of personal experience would be incommunicable and most of human culture would not have happened. (NACCCE, 1999: 35)

Thus, in spite of its lengthy discussion of multimodal creativity, the NACCCE report held an agenda in common with *The Arts in Schools* 'to promote parity of provision between the arts, humanities, sciences and other major areas of the curriculum' (NACCCE, 1999: 14), and the authors of the NACCCE report suggested that this might be achieved by removing the distinction between core and foundation subjects in the forthcoming revised National Curriculum of 2000. The NACCCE report was, therefore, very much a continuation of Ken Robinson's

mission to address an alleged imbalance between the arts and the non-arts in education.

New Labour's response to the NACCCE report's curriculum recommendations

According to Joubert (2001: 28), the NACCCE report had a very positive reception from all sectors, and she claims that 'Everyone felt that this was a long overdue report, which conveyed the collective feelings of many people'. Notwithstanding the widespread support for the NACCCE report, the government failed to implement its curriculum recommendations (Joubert, 2001). Rather than look to the arts as a means to address the nation's educational needs, New Labour instead retained a more narrow focus on how to raise standards in literacy and numeracy; the issue originally flagged up in its first White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE:1997). According to Docking (cited in Phillips & Harper-Jones, 2003: 127), New Labour's obsession with literacy and numeracy stemmed from its conviction that prosperity can only be achieved through competition in world markets, and the belief that economic success is dependent upon having a highly numerate and literate workforce. On the grounds that standards in English schools compared unfavourably with other countries, particularly in the Pacific Rim, New Labour claimed that the government must raise academic standards by raising teachers' expectations (Phillips & Harper-Jones, 2003), and rather than embrace the NACCCE report's recommendations for a revision of the National Curriculum in favour of the arts, New Labour continued to prioritise performance, assessment and accountability in what many critics considered to be a continuation of Conservative educational policy (Phillips & Harper-Jones, 2003). Although New Labour's willingness to commission the NACCCE report understandably gave hope to those who, like Robinson, wanted the arts to be given greater importance in schools, New Labour's rejection of the report's request for a radical shake-up of the National Curriculum should, perhaps, have come as no surprise. According to Tony Blair's education guru, Professor Michael Barber (1997: 68), Blair had no intention of abandoning the policies ushered in by the 1988 Education Reform Act, which Barber also admired:

In spite of their blunders, [the Conservative government's reforms] brought about progress in four important respects: funding had been successfully delegated to schools, national standards had been established, public accountability demanded and the producer stranglehold on policy loosened. Wrong though ministers often were in the decade of reform, about these four principles they were basically right. They have provided a platform upon which the Blair government can build an education system fit for the twenty-first century. (Barber, 1997: 68)

Following its election victory of 2001, New Labour published another White Paper, *Schools Achieving Success* (DfES, 2001). Here, under the chapter entitled 'Reform in Progress', New Labour described and defended its emphasis on measurement and performance, particularly its literacy and numeracy strategies, all of which allegedly 'proved' educational success. As a result, critics claimed, far from promoting creativity in schools, New Labour's passion for performativity risked alienating creative teachers and stultifying classroom practice (Phillips & Harper-Jones, 2003:130).

Creative Partnerships

The government's failure to reform the curriculum in response to the NACCCE report resulted in much disappointment. For example, Victoria Todd, director of the National Campaign for the Arts (NCA), claims that the NCA waited with 'eager anticipation' for the launch of the NACCCE report, only to have its hopes for curriculum change dashed (Todd, 2002: 10). New Labour's apparent determination to ignore the report caused Joubert to remark that:

The current Labour government is sending some very confusing messages regarding this report and it is difficult to determine why. Why did they commission the whole inquiry and spend taxpayers' money to fund it if they did not intend taking the advice to heart? (Joubert, 2001: 29)

Although Joubert puts forward a range of possible explanations for the government's alleged snub of the NACCCE report (including such things as fear of progressivism and Civil Service intransigence), New Labour *did* take notice of the report: it resulted in the establishment of Creative Partnerships. In response to the NACCCE report, Gerry Robinson, Chair of the Arts Council England, gave a New Statesman Lecture in June 2000 in which he 'set out a vision for a kind of

‘creative entitlement’ whereby no child would leave primary school without an opportunity to have direct exposure to the professional arts’ (NFER, 2006: 2), and he suggested that a new national initiative could be launched to bring artists and schools together. The ‘Spending Review 2000’ announcement, submitted to the Cabinet Office and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) by the Arts Council England in July of that year, included the announcement of the Creative Partnerships initiative (NFER, 2006), and in 2001 the government published a Green Paper, *Culture and Creativity, the Next Ten Years* (DCMS, 2001), in which it unveiled Creative Partnerships.

“Ownership” of Creative Partnerships

Tessa Blackstone, Minister of State for the Arts at the DCMS, claimed that her department, along with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), had been instrumental in ‘taking forward many of the [NACCCE] report’s recommendations’, and highlighted Creative Partnerships’ role in this endeavour (Blackstone, 2002: 3). Meanwhile, Todd (2002: 14) claimed that the National Campaign for the Arts played a key role in lobbying on behalf of the NACCCE by distributing copies of *All Our Futures* so that it would not ‘slip away into obscurity’, and Todd greeted the pilot programme of Creative Partnerships with enthusiasm, vowing that the NCA would lobby for it to be rolled-out nationwide after its pilot. It would appear, then, that the supporters of the arts in education and New Labour felt that they “owned” Creative Partnerships, in spite of their contradictory responses to the NACCCE report’s recommendations for curriculum reform. The belief that the supporters of the arts in education had ownership of Creative Partnerships may have stemmed from the fact that the impetus for Creative Partnerships (like the NACCCE report itself) came from *outside* the DCMS and the DfES (Jones & Thomson, 2008): in effect, the Arts Council England and the NCA’s involvement in the setting up of Creative Partnerships served to mask New Labour’s association with the programme, and thereby contributed to the impression (discussed below) that Creative Partnerships stood outside New Labour’s mainstream education policy.

CAPE UK

The Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, described Creative Partnerships as a ‘radical’ new initiative (Smith in DCMS, 2001: 8), yet a programme called CAPE UK was already up and running in 1997 and using the term ‘Creative Partnerships’ to describe its own projects (Doherty & Harland, 2001). CAPE UK provided the working model for Creative Partnerships, and it is therefore necessary to look briefly at this programme in order to understand how Creative Partnerships was both an extension of Conservative education policy and a ‘radical’ departure from existing practice. CAPE UK was itself based upon an earlier scheme, the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), founded in America in 1992, where CAPE’s innovative project aimed to achieve whole school change by forging partnerships between schools and creative practitioners in the Chicago area. The subsequent improvement in the standardised test scores, higher order thinking skills and social skills of the pupils that took part in CAPE appeared to confirm both the educational and the social value of the programme (www.capeweb.org, 2008), and the success of CAPE in America prompted John Major’s Conservative government to commission a briefing paper (Downing, 1995) to establish a major project involving schools, arts organisations and creative businesses in the UK. In 1997 the Creative Arts Partnerships in Education (United Kingdom) (CAPE UK) was duly established as a charitable trust working across secondary schools in Leeds and Manchester, and like the Chicago initiative, CAPE UK was targeted at disaffected and disadvantaged pupils. In their 2001 evaluation of CAPE UK, Doherty and Harland suggest that the word ‘Creative’ (as opposed to ‘Chicago’) in the UK title signalled ‘a central aspiration to enhance the place of creativity right across the curriculum’ (2001: 1), and from the outset the creative arts were held to be fundamental to the CAPE UK’s mission to re-engage marginalised pupils and develop their academic potential. (Of course, another possibility is that the substitution of ‘Chicago’ with ‘Creative’ was a matter of convenience, rather than evidence of an intention to harness the supposed socio-economic power of “creativity”, see below.)

The authors of the NACCCE report were aware of CAPE UK, and in fact held a consultative meeting with Pat Cochrane, Chief Executive of CAPE UK (NACCCE, 1999), and *All Our Futures* is peppered with sound bites from CAPE

UK, such as ‘Partnerships are potentially one of the most powerful tools in securing the development of creativity in education’ (NACCCE, 1999: 129). Indeed, an entire chapter is devoted to ‘Developing Partnerships’ (1999: 120-139), presumably to appeal to the government’s expressed interest in partnerships between schools and outside agencies (see *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE: 1997)). Under ‘Developing Partnerships’, the authors of the NACCCE report acknowledge that ‘Creative partnerships between school, business and the wider community are already taking place in many areas’ (1999: 121) and they quote CAPE UK in praise of the symbiotic relationship that develops between participants in creative projects.

Although the establishment of CAPE UK preceded both the NACCCE report and the launch of Creative Partnerships, the role of the NACCCE report in establishing the latter should not be underestimated, since there is evidence to suggest that CAPE UK was not (at this time) providing a clear statement of the purpose and value of creativity that – without the intercession of the NACCCE report – would have translated into nationwide policy (Doherty & Harland, 2001). According to Doherty and Harland (2001: 1), when CAPE UK was launched in 1997, ‘discussions about the role of creativity in pupils’ learning were comparatively rare and somewhat esoteric’, and Doherty and Harland’s 2001 evaluation of CAPE UK reveals a sense of confusion over the nature of creativity. Although CAPE UK’s avowed aim was to enhance the curriculum through creativity, its agenda was unclear and the priorities within the partnerships varied widely between schools, and as a result, Doherty and Harland uncovered not only a range of different interpretations of creativity held by creative practitioners working in schools, but also a ‘deep-rooted suspicion of what creativity means amongst the teachers’ (Doherty & Harland, 2001: 14). According to Doherty and Harland, it was the NACCCE report, rather than CAPE UK, that drew national attention to the relationship between creativity and education. Thus, despite the fact that it was Prime Minister John Major, rather than Tony Blair, who first established formal partnerships between creative practitioners and schools in deprived areas, the NACCCE report’s ingenious account of creativity made New Labour’s Creative Partnerships feel like an exciting departure from existing educational practice.

Common ground between New Labour and supporters of the arts in education

Given that the Arts Council England, with the support of the NCA, put forward a plan for Creative Partnerships, informed by the NACCCE report and modelled on CAPE UK, and that this plan was funded by the DCMS and DfES - in spite of New Labour's refusal to countenance the NACCCE report's curriculum recommendations - we might assume that the supporters of the arts in education and the government found some common ground in the NACCCE report upon which to build this programme. Indeed, the Arts Council England and the DCMS's respective positioning of Creative Partnerships does suggest that they shared a vision of the utility of the arts: according to the Arts Council England (in NFER, 2006: 2), one of the main purposes of Creative Partnerships was to 'create new ways of including young people of school age in the cultural life of their communities', and according to the DCMS (2001: 21), 'the arts and creativity can play an important part in tackling disaffection and alienation, whilst also being a powerful force for social cohesion'. The idea that arts-based activities can forge community links - and that such links are useful in areas of socio-economic deprivation - can be traced to the NACCCE report (and the reports and initiatives that it references, including CAPE UK). As stated in Chapter Four, the NACCCE report offers a depressing account of childhood in the UK, blighted by drug use, 'gang culture and street violence' (1999: 23); social ills that, it suggests, are partly the result of long-term unemployment and social breakdown. The NACCCE report draws upon the claim, originally put forward in *The Arts in Schools*, that engagement with the arts enhances pupils' self-efficacy during periods of economic and social turbulence, and it suggests that arts-based initiatives can 'mitigate the economic problems of changing patterns of work' by 'restoring confidence and community spirit through shared creative projects' (NACCCE, 1999: 56). In this manner, the NACCCE report, while seeking to demonstrate the universal value of the arts, presented a case for the provision of creative partnerships between artists and schools in deprived areas. In advocating partnerships between artists and schools, the NACCCE was merely echoing, once again, *The Arts in Schools*, which championed the much earlier Artists in Education schemes, established by the Arts Council in 1969. According to *The*

Arts in Schools, ‘Working with professional artists can benefit pupils in three ways: in improving *skills, attitudes and understanding*’ (CGF, 1982: 116; italics in original). The longstanding faith in the pedagogic value of linking schools with professional artists made such partnerships appealing to supporters of the arts in education, and New Labour, while perhaps unconvinced by the NACCCE report’s case for whole curriculum change was, it seems, nonetheless impressed by its argument in favour of creative partnerships for deprived and disaffected young people; a policy endorsed, like the standards agenda, by the preceding Conservative government.

Creative Partnerships and the obfuscation of post-88 performativity

Notwithstanding the blatant instrumentalism at work in much of New Labour’s education policy (Marshall, 2001: 123), there was little reason to doubt the sincerity of the government’s enthusiasm for the arts: New Labour invested £252 million in the arts in 2001-2 (BBC, 2001), and as a result many museum and galleries were able to waive their entry fees, and numerous arts projects were instigated across the UK (Billington, 2001). New Labour’s decision to launch Creative Partnerships was, therefore, widely interpreted as an endorsement of the belief that there is more to education than the development of literacy and numeracy, and that “art for art’s sake” enriches our lives, and Creative Partnerships was thus welcomed by many as a corrective to post-88 performativity (see for example Todd, 2002). In reality, however, Creative Partnerships was very much part of the post-88 performativity agenda: the aim of performativity was to create an internationally competitive workforce by creating excellent schools; the aim of Creative Partnerships was to create an internationally competitive workforce by linking artists with schools to create harmonious communities of self-efficacious individuals. It might be tempting to suppose that a non-instrumental vision for Creative Partnerships emerged from the NACCCE report, and that this vision was somehow corrupted by New Labour, yet performativity was not something imposed upon the programme by the government: in seeking to carve a greater niche for the arts in education, the authors of the NACCCE report deliberately appealed to Prime Minister Tony Blair’s expressed interest in raising standards to create a strong workforce, and in

so doing made a case for the arts to be used as a means to circumvent any problems that might disrupt the employability agenda (for example, socially and economically disadvantaged pupils being in “failing” schools) by placing creative practitioners in direct contact with pupils in deprived areas. Although the NACCCE authors’ primary mission was, of course, to raise the profile of the arts in the curriculum, there is little reason to suppose that these authors were antithetical to the idea that the creative arts might be used instrumentally to cultivate a dynamic and flexible workforce, since they helped spread this very idea. For example, in 1997, Lewis Minkin, a member of the NACCCE committee, published his book, *Exits and Entrances: Political Research as a Creative Art*. In this book, which foreshadowed the NACCCE report, Minkin offers the arts as both a means to assist the market’s productivity and as an emotional counterbalance to the operation of the market:

Human capital and socio-economic productivity are now inextricably linked...and an increasingly important economic and social role is being played by the cultural sector with its emphasis on the utilisation of creative ability. At the same time there is also a strong international reassertion of the value of human development and human well-being independent of considerations of market competitiveness or economic growth. (Minkin, 1997: 324)

The idea that engagement with the creative arts may develop our ability to contribute to the operation of the free market, and simultaneously help us to interact with our community and our “inner self”, is also expressed by Ken Robinson - Chair of the NACCCE - in his own book, *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*, which was published two years after the NACCCE report, and coincided with the government’s announcement of Creative Partnerships:

Sensitiveness to oneself and to others is a vital element in the development of the personal qualities that are now urgently needed, in business, in the community and in personal life. It is through feelings as well as through reason that we find our real creative power. It is through both that we connect with each other and the wider world – with culture. And it is through culture that creativity is driven and expressed. (Robinson, 2001: 165)

In their respective books, Minkin and Robinson appear to endorse what Dillow (2007: 19) identifies as the ‘managerialist’ belief that ‘a single central self can control the individual’s life’ and that this project might be assisted through the creative arts. Minkin and Robinson’s ideas are thus reminiscent of Sternberg’s

(1996) claim that creativity enables individuals to flourish in the modern capitalist state, irrespective of the reality of their socio-economic circumstances.

Conclusion

Rather than refuse to go along with the instrumentalism that characterised much of New Labour's thinking, the authors of the NACCCE report reached agreement with the government over the idea that engagement with the creative arts might develop the individual as a productive worker and a socially-adept citizen, and both sides appeared to find no incongruity in using the arts to bolster the operation of the free market economy and to develop sensitivity towards oneself and others. Indeed, the NACCCE report's construction of creativity highlights the supposed utility of the arts to address social malaise in impoverished communities experiencing generational unemployment. While everyone, from The Arts Council England to the NCA and the DCMS, was keen to take credit for the launch of Creative Partnerships, the morality of using the creative arts to further the operation of the Third Way was not, it seems, questioned.

When considering why so many supporters of the arts in education greeted Creative Partnerships with enthusiasm, rather than cynicism, the masking factor of the word "creativity" should not be underestimated: as stated in Chapter Three, this noun is highly seductive and is so aligned with human wellbeing as to be impervious to criticism, and its use effectively cloaked the programme with goodness. To gain a sense of how "democratic" the word creativity appears, we might consider the following quotation from Robert Sternberg:

Many of the world's governments depend on ignorance for their existence. In autocracies, education and especially creative thinkers pose perhaps the greatest threats to their existence. In democracies, one would hope that creativity would be more valued, and it probably is. Never the less, many of the governments that are elected got into place only through the ignorance and narrow-mindedness of the people who selected them. The last thing these governments want is critical and creative thinking that would threaten their existence. Indeed, the level of political discourse in many of the world's so-called democracies is only slightly above that of the autocracies, if it is above that level at all. (Sternberg, 2006: 2)

New Labour's willingness to embrace creativity was, it seems, read by many as New Labour's willingness to embrace freedom, and for this reason it was assumed that Creative Partnerships would be democratic and liberating; a source of fresh air in classrooms stifled by post-88 performativity. The disjunction between Creative Partnerships' implied agenda of liberation and the centrally-directed, highly-prescriptive teaching and learning taking place in the schools in which the programme was to operate was not well-interrogated prior to the launch of the initiative, and according to Jones and Thomson (2008: 720), Creative Partnerships' attitude towards the agency of teachers and learners is, to this day, 'at odds with the enduring terms of the post-1988 educational settlement, in which such agency is strongly channelled by government'. Consequently, creative practitioners hired by Creative Practitioners have tended to assume that Creative Partnerships is a point of resistance to post-88 performativity, and have at times been puzzled over the mismatch between their expectations for, and the reality of, Creative Partnerships in practice (Jones & Thomson, 2008). In order to explore this issue in more depth, the following chapter offers an examination of some research into the operation of Creative Partnerships.

Chapter Six

Creative Partnerships and Freedom

This chapter examines some studies of Creative Partnerships in order to consider the freedom offered by the programme to teachers, artists and pupils.

Introduction

When unveiling Creative Partnerships, Tony Blair displayed no hesitancy over whether or not “creativity” was a useful, or indeed sensible, construct. Instead, Blair assumed that the rationale of Creative Partnerships was logical and ethical, stating:

This Government knows that culture and creativity matter. They matter because they can enrich all our lives, and everyone deserves the opportunity to develop their own creative talents and to benefit from those of others. They matter because our rich and diverse culture helps bring us together – it’s part of our great success as a nation. They also matter because creative talent will be crucial to our individual and national economic success in the economy of the future. Above all, at their best, the arts and creativity set us free. (Blair, 2001: 3)

A parallel may be drawn between the language used to describe Creative Partnerships and the language employed in the Consultation Document of another New Labour programme, the Foundation Degree; language which Doyle (2003: 284) describes as ‘promotional, monological and based on a view of the world that is certain’. When discussing Creative Partnerships, Blair did not *believe* that culture and creativity matter: he *knew*. Blair did not *think* that creative talent will be crucial to our economic success, and *hope* that the arts and creativity might set us free: he informed the nation that it would be so. According to Dillow (2007:84), New Labour’s monological worldview was symptomatic of a ‘managerialist’ outlook; a perspective conditioned by the belief, first, that a social system’s goals can be decided upon in advance of action and attained through that action; second, that central agencies have the power to administer society for the better (Dillow, 2007: 84) and third, that performance maximisation is the best goal for the social system (Lyotard, 1979/2005: 16).

Nowhere was New Labour's fascination with goals and targets more evident than in its education policy. As stated previously, New Labour proclaimed in 1997 that education was the government's 'number one priority' (DfEE, 1997), and it quickly became apparent that New Labour's education policy would revolve around raising standards in literacy and numeracy in order to create an internationally competitive workforce. Under New Labour, standards would be raised through a process of 'pressure and support on a deep and large scale' (Fullan & Earl, 2002), and the Education Secretary, David Blunkett, suggested that his 'head would be on the block' if the government's literacy and numeracy targets were not reached by 2002: indeed, when the primary school targets *were* missed in 2002, Blunkett's successor, Estelle Morris, was pressed to resign (BBC, 2002). The chastisement of Ministers was part of New Labour's "zero tolerance" for educational failure: in the words of New Labour's education guru, Michael Barber (2001: 20), the government expected schools and teachers to do 'an excellent job' and promised to 'hold them to account for their performance'.

Leaving nothing to chance, New Labour contracted a team of academics at the University of Toronto to monitor the implementation of the English National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy between 1997 and 2001. Michael Fullan, a member of that team, reported that:

In the first four years, the initiative has been heavily directed from the centre. Although there have been strong investments in local capacity building, the overall strategy has prescribed targets, scripted lessons, monitored progress, and the like. As we interpret large scale reform, our conclusion is that a fair degree of top-down initiative is required at the beginning, followed by investment in local capacity-building, followed in turn by greater attention to local creativity, reflection and networking. (Fullan & Earl, 2002: 4)

It is interesting to note that Fullan and Earl employ the word "creativity" here without explaining what it means or how it relates to raising standards, yet by just expressing the idea that New Labour might be interested in 'local creativity, reflection and networking', Fullan and Earl (2002) gave New Labour's remorseless pursuit of standards a human face. Indeed, the suggestion that the standards agenda was an empathetic response to children's needs was a persistent feature of New Labour's policy rhetoric: for example, in 2003, new league tables for secondary schools were produced that employed 'added value' measures to show the progress that pupils had made throughout their schooling, and these

measures supposedly demonstrated New Labour's concern for the ongoing development of the individual child (Bristow, 2004). Notwithstanding New Labour's compassionate claim that 'every child matters' (TSO, 2003), critics such as Jennie Bristow claimed that New Labour's 'added value' measures did not, in fact, help socially and economically disadvantaged children:

Genuine 'progression', in terms of young people having their minds developed, their ideas challenged and their horizons raised through education, does not seem to matter much to those in the government's education department. What matters is that young people are in the system for longer, doing something more constructive than vandalising cars: and if 'progression' means that they have gone from being illiterate to only semi-literate, this is apparently something to be celebrated. (Bristow, 2004: 128)

According to Marshall (1999), the obsession with performativity is a depressing attribute of neoliberalism, which reduces education to the perfection of a system:

Bleak indeed is the desire for perfection. In this condition, the demands of performativity mean not the pursuit of educational ideals, like personal autonomy, or emancipation but, instead, the subsumption of education under the demands of efficiency for the total social system. (Marshall, 1999: 310)

New Labour's vision of education caused despair amongst some academics, including Alan Hudson (2004: 18), who denounced education in England as a 'shallow and fetid pool'.

Marshall's (1999) critique of performativity sheds light upon the issue, touched upon in the previous chapter, of *why* Creative Partnerships was welcomed by the same supporters of the arts in education who had previously expressed despondency over New Labour's commitment to post-88 performativity in the wake of the NACCCE report. Marshall (1999: 310) notes that 'personal autonomy' and 'emancipation' are educational ideals that are crushed by performativity, yet these very ideals are enshrined within Creative Partnerships' manifesto (see DCMS, 2001). When unveiling Creative Partnerships, Blair (2001:3) put forward the claim that the arts and creativity can 'set us free', and while Blair's description of culture and creativity is symptomatic of New Labour's monological worldview, the rhetoric of "liberation" used to describe Creative Partnerships draws upon a position that appears to *counter* this worldview. Whether deliberate or not, Blair's choice of words established a double lens through which to view Creative Partnerships: for the supporters of the

arts in education, freedom meant an escape from post-88 performativity, while for New Labour, freedom meant increased performativity in areas of high unemployment where pupils are shackled to low aspiration (see Chapter Four). The aim of this present chapter is to explore the tension between the rhetoric of liberation that underpins Creative Partnerships and the rhetoric of performativity that underpins education more generally, and to uncover whether, in actuality, individuals and/or schools hope to gain freedom from post-88 performativity via Creative Partnerships, and how much freedom Creative Partnerships delivers in practice.

Since its launch in 2002, Creative Partnerships has generated a large amount of research in the form of government evaluations, reports commissioned by Creative Partnerships, and independent academic studies. Rather than attempt to discuss all of this research, a sample of nine studies has been selected for consideration in this chapter. Seven of these studies were found using Google Scholar and JSTOR; one was given to me by a staff member at Creative Partnerships, and one was given to me by one of the authors of that study. Although these studies represent only a fraction of the studies and reports on Creative Partnerships, they were read in conjunction with a larger body of literature and arguably constitute a representative sample of that literature. This chapter is divided into four parts: (1) teachers and freedom; (2) artists and freedom; (3) pupils and freedom; (4) the freedom to succeed academically. It concludes with a discussion of these “freedoms”.

1. Teachers and freedom

Dominic Wyse and David Spendlove (2007) examined the operation of Creative Partnerships in 25 primary and secondary schools. In their ensuing report, Wyse and Spendlove (2007) offer little evidence to support the idea that teachers welcome Creative Partnerships as a means to resist post-88 performativity: on the contrary, they found that schools tend to view Creative Partnerships as a vehicle to raise standards:

One of the most common foci for the primary schools was the improvement of writing. This was not directly inspired by the aim to enhance creativity but more an outcome of the Government dissatisfaction with national statutory test scores for writing. (Wyse & Spendlove, 2007: 185)

The primary schools' fascination with how Creative Partnerships might enhance pupils' literacy is understandable, given New Labour's demand for schools to meet national literacy targets, and although Wyse and Spendlove express concern over this finding, their observation that some teachers appeared 'unsure about the freedom that was being offered and lacked confidence to embrace creative opportunities' suggests that, with the right encouragement, teachers might be able to look beyond target-driven teaching (Wyse & Spendlove, 2007: 188). However, the idea that teachers simply lack the confidence to resist performativity is undermined by the findings from an ethnographic study conducted in a suburban primary school by Christine Hall, Pat Thomson and Lisa Russell (reported in two papers: Thomson *et al*, 2006; Hall *et al*, 2007), which indicate that some teachers do not want to resist performativity and are, in fact, *unreceptive* to creative projects that defy the standards agenda. Reporting on a Creative Partnerships project in which a professional playwright worked with a group of children to produce a play script, Hall *et al* state:

Amongst the teachers, the project was understood to be part of the subject English, a high-status 'singular' with a hierarchical knowledge structure...creative writing was usually an individual activity, informed by secretarial considerations and influenced by a particular view of genre instantiated in the National Literacy Strategy...The writer, on the other hand, rejected the kinds of formal genre boundaries set out in the National Literacy Strategy as required learning about how to write. He was interested in an integrated approach to the curriculum: he wanted the children to learn more about themselves by writing fiction. (Hall *et al*, 2007: 611)

Thomson *et al* (2006: 31) describe the resultant play script as 'vaguely surreal, very Ridley Scott or Roald Dahl', and note that the head-teacher was horrified by the script's dramatisation of teenage pregnancy, domestic abuse and school children being served chips off the floor by 'dinner ladies with snotty noses and dirty hands' (Thomson *et al*, 2006: 32). Rather than relish the writer's rejection of the formal genre boundaries prescribed by government, the teachers were *hostile*

to his resistance to post-88 performativity, and expressed the opinion that the play script was ‘bizarre’ and ‘a stark contrast to the kinds of writing the children did in class’ (Thomson *et al*, 2006: 35). Although the head-teacher acknowledged that the children had produced ‘powerful writing’, and that the writer had been ‘a powerful role model of a writer’ (Thomson *et al*, 2006: 35), she decided to ban the performance of the play and the publication of the play script, on the grounds that the school needed to maintain a good public image ‘in the current testing and inspection regime’ (Thomson *et al*, 2006: 38). In the words of the staff, the controversial text was ‘not what we want to promote’ (Thomson *et al*, 2006: 38).

The teachers’ desire to work with, rather than against, the constraints of post-88 performativity is accompanied by a lack of autonomy on the part of teachers in relation to Creative Partnerships itself. According to the authors of the National Evaluation of Creative Partnerships (NFER, 2006: 36), during the pilot programme schools had been under the illusion that Creative Partnerships was a discretionary funding source, and were unhappy to discover that they had to bid for projects, and that funds were allocated ‘according to the Director’s judgement of the extent to which the school’s ideas were aligned with their own vision of what Creative Partnerships was trying to achieve’. From the outset, teachers have not been free to develop their own vision for Creative Partnerships, but have needed instead to complement the vision of their local Creative Director, and this lack of freedom may go some way towards explaining why some teachers have adopted an instrumental outlook on Creative Partnerships, as identified by Hall *et al*, 2007:

Increasingly, the model of the arts in UK primary schools is a quasi-economic one: commissioned projects are bought in, to produce a performance or an outcome. Where sustainability is considered, it is about replicability of the project’s processes, so that it can be repeated at different times with different children, possibly without the expense of buying in the artists. (Hall *et al*, 2007: 618)

Thus, while teachers are not free to fully control a Creative Partnerships project that takes place in their school, they are free to bid for a project, and may establish “ownership” of its outcome, and replicate (or suppress) the outcome in order to maximise the performance of their school’s system.

2. *Artists and freedom*

The playwright reported by Thomson *et al* (2006) and Hall *et al* (2007) was baffled by the teachers' reaction to the play script: this writer worked with Creative Partnerships 'on the basis that he wanted the arts experience to be different from regular schooling, not the same' (Thomson *et al*, 2006: 38), and he deliberately encouraged the pupils to draw upon their out-of-school experiences and art forms that went beyond the scope of the National Literacy Strategy. The writer's interest in the resistance to performativity 'placed him on a potentially conflicting trajectory with the staff' (Thomson *et al*, 2006: 38), and the academic researchers witnessed the ensuing power struggle, which the writer lost:

...the writer was unable to access teachers' support or interest in his methods and approach; he had no control over the decision about whether to publish the final text, and generally had little autonomy, despite the fact that the work was linked to a high-status curriculum area. (Hall *et al*, 2007: 612)

Clearly, the Creative Partnerships project offered the professional writer limited freedom: although the teachers had failed to prevent the creation of what they deemed a 'bizarre' play script (Thomson *et al*, 2006: 35), the writer was equally powerless to stop them from blocking its dissemination. Furthermore, the writer did not appear to believe that he been given the freedom to liberate the pupils from means-end rationality, and in fact expressed the opinion that the pupils did not attach much significance to the project, presumably because they had not been able to perform their play script to an audience.

The lack of freedom on the part of the creative practitioner to control the outcome of a Creative Partnerships project is also noted by Steven Miles (2004) in his account of a project that took place in a secondary school in the North East of England, in which an architect worked with a group of Year 11 pupils to design a skate park. In contrast to the school observed by Thomson *et al* (2006), the school examined by Miles (2004: 2) actively sought to collapse the divide between pupils' "official" and "unofficial" knowledge by bringing into the school context 'aspects of young people's creativity that are representative of their lives outside that environment' (which in this instance was skateboarding) so that the pupils' extra-curricular creativity might be used as a springboard to the development of creative thinking in the classroom. For the pupils, however, the aim of the project

was to design and build a skate park, and the mismatch between the educators' abstract aim and the pupils' pragmatic aim resulted in tension. In an apparent echo of the teachers' assertion that the "un-performable" play script was 'bizarre' (Thomson *et al*, 2006: 35), the architect's suggestion that this skate park project was 'about freeing up your mind a bit' and 'Juxtaposing things that are equal to more than objects' was described by the pupils as 'weird' (Miles, 2004: 8). The architect was exasperated by the pupils' determination to 'abide by skating conventions' (Miles, 2004: 9) to build a traditional box-shaped skate park, which he described as 'predictable' (Miles, 2004: 9), and he urged the pupils to give greater consideration to the visual impact of the building, to which one pupil replied: 'I don't care what it looks like outside as long as it's good inside' (Miles, 2004: 9). Although the pupils did eventually recognise the validity of the architect's assertion that it is important to play with ideas during the design process, the skate park that the pupils designed was not built due to lack of money. As in the case of the playwright, the architect had no control over the external factors that blocked the translation of the pupils' dreams into reality, and it would appear that the only freedom he enjoyed was the freedom to challenge the pupils' conviction that 'a square would be the best for a skate park' (Miles, 2004: 9).

3. *Pupils and freedom*

The pupils in the reports discussed thus far were powerless to stage their play or build their skate park, which indicates that pupils are not automatically free to determine the outcome of Creative Partnerships projects. This lack of pupil autonomy is not, however, limited to the control of project outcomes: a further study by Miles (2007) suggests that Creative Partnerships does not always offer pupils freedom from post-88 performativity during the learning experience, in terms of liberating pupils from the employability agenda. Miles (2007) conducted a six-month study of a Creative Partnerships project that took place in the 'Creative Campus' in County Durham, a facility which provides performance training for young people that have been excluded from mainstream education. In his ensuing report, Miles (2007: 505) expressed his concern over New Labour's

desire to 'give socially and economically marginal individuals the opportunity to adapt to changing economic conditions, while neglecting the underlying causes of exclusion', and he identified the chimera of economic empowerment offered by schemes such as Creative Partnerships. Notwithstanding his unease over the instrumental use of arts-based education, Miles found much to admire in this Creative Partnerships project. The young people (aged between 14 and 18) interviewed and observed by Miles (2007: 508-9) were from 'complicated family and educational backgrounds' and had 'particular problems in dealing with authority', yet in spite of the extremely challenging behaviour exhibited by these young people, the staff at the Creative Campus were determined to offer them a viable alternative to mainstream education, in which 'they were accepted as valid individuals' (Miles, 2007: 509). Miles (2007: 510) records the views of a young person, who claimed that the teachers at his mainstream school had told him he was 'a misfit' who would not get a job, and that in the 'big wide world' no one is 'gonna like you', whereas the staff at the Creative Campus 'aren't telling you that. They're telling you you've got capabilities'. Miles records the experience of another pupil, who claimed that she had experienced a sense of 'authority' during performance work, because the cast trusted her (Miles, 2007: 512).

Overall, the young people appeared to feel more at ease with themselves and others as a result of taking part in the project, and this finding suggests that Creative Partnerships' projects may offer troubled young people an opportunity to reassess the quality of their interactions with other people prior to leaving full-time education. However, the actual project aimed to go beyond this important remit, in order to focus on the 'practical value of creative learning' by aligning the learning experience with employability (Miles, 2007: 512). Thus, the young people were asked to take part in a mock-interview for a fictional performance-related job, and Miles records the awkward result of this endeavour:

When being interviewed, one individual's behaviour was entirely incongruous with an interview setting. This young person behaved in a way that was apparently inappropriate, but not intentionally so. He was being himself. (Miles, 2007: 513)

This young person's experience arguably encapsulates the tension inherent in attempting, as politicians have done, to marry freedom with post-88 performativity. On the one hand, Creative Partnerships strives to enhance the self-

esteem of individuals who have had their self-image damaged, in order to liberate them from low economic expectations, but on the other hand Creative Partnerships is expected to harmonize this “self” with the demands of the free market economy, so that individuals’ raised expectations might be translated into employability. Arguably, the focus on employability risks damaging disadvantaged young people’s fledgling self-esteem, developed through arts-based education, by forcing them to acknowledge the incongruity between their actual self and the “ideal self” that is aligned with the behaviours of more privileged individuals, who may fittingly “be themselves” in job interviews. Furthermore, the employability agenda is somewhat illogical: as noted by Miles (2007: 515), creative learning for employment provides ‘something of a false hope in a local economic context in which opportunities are challenging to secure, and in which the job market is polarised’. The ethics of deferring questions about the structural constraints faced by socially and economically deprived young people is not addressed by schemes such as Creative Partnerships, and Jones and Thomson (2008: 724) speak out against the ‘habitual over claiming’ of educational initiatives that seek to promote qualities such as ‘inclusivity and creativity’. According to Jones and Thomson (2008: 724), such initiatives gloss over the improbability of yoking together ‘economic dynamism, with its polarising effects, and the rescue of the ex-working class from its state of social exclusion’. Furthermore, Jones and Thomson (2008) point out that this model of education denies the fact that individual fulfilment and social cohesion are not always compatible agendas, as demonstrated globally in 2008 by the bankers’ pursuit of self-interest, which disrupted the operation of national economies (see Chapter Four), and more locally by the young people in the Creative Campus, whose expression of individual turmoil disrupted the operation of mainstream schools, from which they were subsequently excluded.

Although Miles’ (2007) report indicates that Creative Partnerships does not automatically offer pupils freedom from post-88 performativity, or indeed the freedom to succeed economically, his claim that Creative Partnerships offers disadvantaged young people the freedom to express themselves in a supportive environment appears to be corroborated by Morwenna Griffiths in her study of how the arts might work for social justice in schools. Griffiths conducted her study of Creative Partnerships in collaboration with staff members in three

Nottingham schools, one of which is a special school for children with severe and profound learning difficulties (Griffiths *et al*, 2006). Griffiths *et al* (2006: 358) state that the three schools in their study, like the Creative Campus examined by Miles (2007), contain predominantly poor, working class pupils, and they acknowledge the significance of social injustice based upon the unequal distribution of resources. However, Griffiths *et al* (2006: 358) also draw attention to the significance of social injustice based upon *recognition*: within our society, they argue, some groups are held in contempt, or are ignored altogether. In light of Griffiths *et al*'s (2006: 370) claim that the voices of ignored people, such as individuals with disabilities, need to be listened to in order for 'deep democracy' to flourish in our nation, their account of the Creative Partnerships project in the special needs school takes on a particular significance. The reported experiences of the children here suggest that the Creative Partnerships project helped raise the children's confidence about their capacity to join in class activities, and provided a valuable opportunity for them to learn 'how to be present in a public space' (Griffiths *et al*, 2006: 366; 368). However, although the creative practitioners helped to give voice to young people with disabilities, they did so under the umbrella of existing practice within the special needs school: in a reversal of the experience of the writer reported by Hall *et al* (2007), the creative practitioners were fulfilling the school's implicit mission statement to help young people learn to be advocates for themselves (Griffiths *et al*, 2006: 367). When the writer, discussed by Hall *et al* (2007), tried to work *against* a primary school culture that was informed by post-88 performativity, the resultant play script was suppressed, even though it contained the voice of the children, who were thereby silenced. Thus a school's ethos may, or may not, support young people's self-expression in the school context. However, Miles' (2007) account of the disastrous mock interview held in the Creative Campus suggests that, even when fully supported by teachers and creative practitioners, the pupil's authentic voice does not necessarily "fit" the demands of society beyond the school gates. Ultimately, Creative Partnerships cannot make employers want to hire the kind of young people targeted for assistance by Creative Partnerships, and this observation raises concern over the use of such programmes to promote equality of opportunity and self-efficacy amongst the most underprivileged members of our society.

4. *The freedom to succeed academically*

In 2008, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) published a report on the longer-term impact of Creative Partnerships on the attainment of young people (Kendall *et al*, 2008). Using the National Pupil Database (NPD), the NFER examined the relationship between attendance at Creative Partnership schools and academic attainment for young people reaching the end of key stages 2, 3 or 4 (i.e. those young people in Years 6, 9 or 11) in 2003 and 2004, and uncovered some small but statistically significant positive associations between attending Creative Partnership activities and attainment (Kendall *et al*, 2008: 1). According to Kendall *et al* (2008: iii), the young people that took part in Creative Partnerships' activities made, on average, the equivalent of 2.5 grades better progress in GCSEs than similar young people in other schools. Given the link between qualifications and employment mentioned in Chapter One of this thesis, this finding is encouraging, and suggests that Creative Partnerships does offer practical assistance to disadvantaged pupils. Further evidence of the practical value of Creative Partnerships is offered by Shelby Wolf in her study of the partnership between two primary teachers and two dramatic artists as they planned and produced a workshop based on an inventive children's book (Wolf, 2008: 89). The study took place in a primary school in an economically deprived town in the North East of England, and the aim of the teachers involved in the project was to expand their pupils' oral and written language (Wolf, 2008: 94). According to Wolf (2008: 101), the children in the study were 'not raised in the swirl of language that characterizes many mainstream families', and presumably the language deficiency of these pupils would, if left unaddressed, compromise their performance at GCSE. As a result of the project, the children broadened their vocabulary and developed their ability to express their ideas both orally and in writing (Wolf, 2008: 99), and the teachers reported that the Creative Partnerships project was of immediate and direct benefit to their pupils.

The findings of both Kendall *et al* (2008) and Wolf (2008) suggest that Creative Partnerships may have an important role to play in helping to ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the same opportunity to succeed in public examinations as children from more prosperous families. Wolf's (2008) study demonstrates that when Creative Partnerships is used to support the

development of skills that underpin academic achievement (in this instance, literacy), then Creative Partnerships has the potential to cancel out the harmful effects of deprivation, such as poor mastery of language, which may impact negatively on pupils' academic attainment. It would appear, then, that Creative Partnerships has fulfilled New Labour's ambition to enhance the employability of socially and economically deprived young people in terms of helping them to gain qualifications. Of course, the significance of this finding is dependent upon the soundness of the theory that enhanced qualifications lead to enhanced economic performance and attendant employment opportunities; a supposition challenged by some economists (Dillow, 2007), as well as some educationalists (see for example, Miles 2007).

Discussion

The nine studies of Creative Partnerships examined in this chapter indicate that the programme is most effective as a means to support the standards agenda by helping pupils achieve higher academic scores, and least effective as a point of resistance to post-88 performativity. This finding is consistent with New Labour's aims for Creative Partnerships, as expressed in *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years* (DCMS, 2001), the document that unveiled Creative Partnerships. In his foreword to this document, Tony Blair talks of giving children the 'freedom' to develop their creative talent; the need to 'free' our best artists; the provision of 'free' access to national museums; cultural institutions being 'freed' from bureaucratic controls; the 'freedom' for everyone to enjoy culture and creativity; the 'liberating spirit' of the government and, as stated previously, the claim that 'the arts and creativity set us free' (Blair, 2001:3). This language of freedom permeates the entire document, making Creative Partnerships appear to be a force for liberation, yet within this document creativity and Creative Partnerships are positioned as subservient to the standards agenda:

Literacy and numeracy form the springboard to learning and achievement throughout life and lie at the heart of a rounded education that fosters creativity, enterprise and innovation...Being creative enables children to make connections between one area of learning and another, to extend their understanding and develop the motor skills necessary for a range of activities, including literacy skills. (DCMS, 2001: 22)

As though to confound any suspicion that the government was absolutely preoccupied with academic standards, New Labour went on to suggest that Creative Partnerships would not exclusively promote literacy and numeracy:

Academic achievement is clearly essential. But it is not the only important outcome of schooling. In the emerging economy, employers emphasise the importance of skills and attitudes such as entrepreneurship, motivation, teamwork, creativity and flexibility. (DCMS, 2001: 24)

The danger of importing into the school context the managerialist belief that “transferable skills” are as important as pragmatic goals because they contribute to the optimization of the system, is revealed through Miles’ (2004) study of the skate park project. Here, the pursuit of “creativity” was held to be valuable because it supposedly enables individuals to compete in the global marketplace, and the creation of a skate park became an academic exercise to help develop young people’s creativity. However, the pupils were highly versed in the gospel of performativity, and for these pupils, attaining the goal (i.e. building a skate park) overruled peripheral considerations that one might associate with “creativity”, such as aesthetics:

Members of the group would often express their frustration at not being able to explore the practical dimensions of the project more thoroughly. “I don’t know how much money we have got yet. Like the money stuff. We need to get the ramp companies involved. We need to get a bit more reality into it.” (Angus). The use of the word ‘reality’ is particularly interesting here. Angus would often use this word in expressing his feelings about the project. (Miles, 2004: 8)

In the end, the skate park was not built due to lack of funds. Throughout the project the pupils had insisted that the budget should be known and adhered to, and Miles (2004: 15) recalls that there was ‘a constant sense that young people had limited faith in the adults involved in the process and that ultimately there was little chance that their work would have a real impact’. The pupils were proved to be correct, and Miles identifies that, in some ways, this project was a betrayal of trust:

Teachers and policy-makers alike must do more than pay lip-service to the creativity of young people. They must be accepted in practice as equal partners in the creative process, and practical projects that do not have a realistic chance of success should be avoided. Otherwise, young people will inevitably become increasingly disillusioned as to their impact on, and future in, the world around them. (Miles, 2004: 17)

Although the architect admitted that the failure to build the skate park was disappointing, he nevertheless attempted to salvage something from the project, arguing that it may have an impact on the participants' lives 'maybe five years down the line, when they find themselves in a situation where they might need to solve similar problems' (Miles, 2004: 16). The architect's sentiments are in accord with New Labour's assertion that academic achievement is 'not the only important outcome of schooling' and that 'attitudes such as entrepreneurship' are also in demand by employers (DCMS, 2001: 24). However, while these young people displayed a "business awareness" that was arguably heightened by this project, they did not posit themselves as aspiring CEOs, keen to learn how to demonstrate "creativity and flexibility" in the face of a tumble in share prices: instead they identified themselves as the victims of discrimination, who desperately wanted a skate park so that they would not be 'moved on' by disgruntled adults (Miles, 2004: 6). No matter how well intentioned, the suggestion that marginalised young people living in an area of high generational unemployment might somehow benefit from learning how to have their ideas squashed and unfulfilled is somewhat galling.

Given the nature of Creative Partnerships projects, which engage children in unusual activities such as African drumming, samba and street theatre, we might be forgiven for supposing that Creative Partnerships is offering teachers, pupils and artists freedom from target-driven, pedagogic instrumentalism. Yet, as shown by the writer whose play script was suppressed by the school (Thomson *et al*, 2006; Hall *et al*, 2007), the educational experiences offered by Creative Partnerships are only held to be valid if they complement the school ethos, which is by-and-large informed by the standards agenda. A play script that does not have a measurable impact on pupils' literacy, and cannot be performed because it does not adequately promote the school within the neoliberal marketplace of education is, it seems, deemed pointless by both staff and pupils. The lack of resistance to post-88 performativity exhibited by teachers and pupils in these nine studies is symptomatic of the 'new orthodoxy' in education, described by Stephen Ball (2001: 47; 54) as the world-wide belief that educational activities should be turned into saleable market products. Although Ball (2001: 48) argues that the international 'paradigm convergence' in thinking about education's economic utility should *not* be used to justify the instrumentalism of New Labour's

education policy, the widespread popularity of the belief that education should be compliant with economic considerations does at least explain why some schools have used arts activities as ‘interior decoration, surface-level demonstrations of welcome and inclusion’ (Hall *et al*, 2007: 618) in order to advertise their school to parents of prospective pupils and to impress government inspectors, rather than as vehicles to challenge the neoliberal marketisation of education.

Ultimately, New Labour’s vision for Creative Partnerships was inspired by its dream of Third Way economic new interventionism under the banner of creativity, and the so-called freedom offered by the launch of Creative Partnerships came down to a simple choice: teachers in deprived areas could either enhance their school’s performance through conventional classroom practice, or they could enhance their school’s performance through arts-based projects in conjunction with Creative Partnerships. There was no question that creative practitioners would be coming into schools under the aegis of Creative Partnerships to symbolically “throw the traders out of the temple” (after Matthew 21: 12).

In Part II of this thesis, attention is turned to my empirical enquiry into Creative Partnerships.

PART II

A STUDY OF CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Chapter Seven

The wisdom and justice of asking “what works”

The aim of this chapter is to explore policy on educational research in order to consider the wisdom and justice of asking “what works” in education, and by extension Creative Partnerships.

Introduction

In Part I of this thesis, the context of Creative Partnerships was considered via an exploration of the history of ideas about education and creativity, and neoliberal economic theory. In Part II of this thesis, attention is turned to the examination of a particular instance of Creative Partnerships. Prior to this endeavour, some of the political and economic concerns discussed in Part I are revisited in the present chapter, in order to consider how they might impact on the ways in which a research question about Creative Partnerships might be posed and answered.

John Elliott and Paul Doherty (2001: 209) ask the important question: has educational research been restructured for the Third Way? This question was prompted by their observation of the measures introduced by New Labour to restructure educational research so that greater emphasis might be given to the ‘practical utilisation of research findings’ in order to maximise the performance of the education system, and the popularity of ‘school effectiveness research’ (SER) suggests that this agenda has not been resisted wholesale by academics (Elliot & Doherty, 2001: 211). Michael Fielding (2001: 143) identifies the ‘enormous psychological as well as practical and political appeal’ of being able to demonstrate that ‘things have changed for the better’, making the popularity of SER understandable, and Kendall *et al*’s (2008) report on the effectiveness of Creative Partnerships as a means to raise the academic attainment of socially and economically deprived pupils arguably provides an example of the warm feeling that may accompany the identification of “what works” in education (Chapter Six). Obviously it would be wrong to criticise educational research on the grounds that it aims to uncover how pupils might be helped to realise their academic potential, yet Elliott and Doherty (2001: 210) sound a note of caution, pointing out that the promotion of SER has gone hand-in-hand with the attempt to make

educators responsible for pupils' social inclusion and equality of opportunity within a neoliberal culture which, as discussed in Chapter Four, channels wealth upwards and *increases* social division (Elliott & Doherty, 2001: 210). Clearly, the justice of casting marginalised young people as autonomous units within a globalised economic network, and positing education as the key to their personal success within that network, is open to question, yet Elliott and Doherty (2001: 210) liken educational researchers to a 'midwife', hired by New Labour to help bring this workforce into existence.

The aim of this chapter, then, is to consider the wisdom and justice of asking "what works" in education, and by extension what works in Creative Partnerships. It begins by outlining the origins of school effectiveness research and school improvement research, and examines some educationalists' attempts to promote educational research into "what works". It then considers the rationale of supporting school effectiveness, and questions the economic theory that underpins the marketisation of education. It concludes by acknowledging that educational researchers today enjoy freedom of choice over research methodology, and considers what might be appropriate when researching Creative Partnerships.

School Effectiveness Research (SER)

According to Reynolds *et al* (1996: 133), school effectiveness research (SER) had 'a somewhat difficult infancy' in the UK due in part to what they considered to be 'The incomplete development of British sociology of education's understanding of the school as a determinant of adolescent careers', and the 1970s' vogue for 'Marxist perspectives that stressed the need to work at the relationship between school and society'. Thus, while prototypes of SER existed in the 1960s in the form of medical and medico-social studies of the differences between schools' delinquency rates and child guidance referral rates (Reynolds *et al*, 1996: 135), it was not until the international 'paradigm convergence' (Ball, 2001: 48) of the 1980s and 1990s, when nations came to share a market-based outlook on education as the consumption of a product, rather than a socio-political relationship, that the idea of quantifying and comparing educational performance gained currency.

The first UK school effectiveness unit was established in 1992 by the Conservative government under John Major, and in 1993 the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) was founded to conduct systematic reviews and develop review methods in social science and public policy. During the 1990s, educational researchers in the UK were at the cutting edge of research into the multiple measures of pupil outcomes, which included such things as locus of control; attendance; delinquency; behavioural problems; attitudes to school; self-esteem; attitudes to school subjects; academic outcomes; gender; parental socio-economic status; parental education; parental ethnicity; age and race (Reynolds *et al*, 1996: 138). The ambitious scope of SER in the UK is analogous to the Human Genome Project, which was established in 1990 in the USA to determine the sequence of chemical base pairs which make up human DNA: in theory, once all of the factors that make up human education were identified and their interaction understood, then educational researchers would be able to develop value-free, scientific strategies to best support the performance of schools.

School Improvement Research (SI)

Clearly SER had the potential to become an important tool for performance maximisation, yet an obvious limitation of SER was that it quantified schools' performance at a particular point in time, and did not consider how change strategies might be implemented (Reynolds *et al* (1996: 145), which compromised its utility as a means to organise education. Although other educational researchers were, contemporaneously, exploring the issue of how individual schools are able to bring about improvement over time, school improvement (SI) research had developed out of the 'teacher as researcher' movement, and employed qualitative methods to 'celebrate' the practical knowledge of practitioners in a given context, making SI researchers somewhat unsympathetic towards the aims and methods of SER. As a result, SER and SI researchers did not tend to link up their research findings (Reynolds *et al*, 1996: 143). To overcome this impasse, the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded a symposium series for over thirty key individuals in the field of SER and SI to

meet and discuss their ideas, and numerous “blended” studies resulted from this dialogue (Reynolds *et al*, 1996: 145). However, in spite of the ESRC’s attempt to orchestrate a marriage between SER and SI, in 1996 David Hargreaves gave a lecture to the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in which he claimed that educational researchers were *not* committing themselves fully to the task of understanding and manipulating educational performance. Hargreaves spoke out against what he called the ‘frankly second-rate educational research’ that:

...does not make a serious contribution to fundamental theory or knowledge; which is irrelevant to practice; which is uncoordinated with any preceding or follow-up research; and which clutters up academic journals that virtually nobody reads. (Hargreaves, 1996: 7)

In so doing, Hargreaves attacked the research paradigm that had previously held back the development of SER, identified by Reynolds *et al* (1996), and promoted instead impartial, co-ordinated research activity geared towards the illumination of school success.

As stated previously, multiple measures of pupil outcomes promised to yield data about educational performance comparable to the Human Genome Project, and Hargreaves used the complexity of SER to justify a national strategy for educational research based on a medical model:

Evidence-based medicine is gaining support because the number of variables affecting the selection of the right treatment are so great that no individual doctor can expect to be a constant master of this complexity. It is much the same complexity of variables influencing student attitudes and behaviour that bewilders teachers. In education we too need evidence about what works with whom under what conditions and with what effects. (Hargreaves, 1996: 8)

Hargreaves’ assertion that individual teachers cannot fathom the complexity of education, and that old-fashioned theory about the relationship between school and society should be abandoned in favour of new-fangled discovery of ‘what works’, was similar in tenor to the views on society expressed by Tony Blair in the Labour Party Manifesto of 1997:

New Labour is a party of ideas and ideals but not of outdated ideology. What counts is what works. The objectives are radical. The means will be modern. (Blair, 1997: 1)

Thus, New Labour appeared to be in tune with educationalists such as Hargreaves; a conjecture that is perhaps confirmed by New Labour’s decision to establish the Standards and Effectiveness Unit within the Department for

Education and Employment in 1997, headed by Blair's education guru, Michael Barber, to progress research into how schools' performance might be improved (Goldstein & Woodhouse, 2000).

Educational Research: A Critique (Tooley, 1998)

In 1998, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) published a report, *Educational Research: A Critique*, authored by James Tooley. The report had been commissioned primarily in response to the comments about the state of educational research made by Hargreaves in his 1996 TTA lecture, and Tooley therefore examined a sample of British academic journal articles in order to uncover whether or not Hargreaves had been right in his assertion that much publicly funded educational research was 'second-rate'. Tooley (1998: 29) concluded that, indeed, 63% of the academic journal articles in his sample did not satisfy 'good practice' as defined by Hargreaves, and he identified a range of problems including the quality of literature reviews, the use of secondary citations, and the lack of triangulation. Tooley (1998: 79) acknowledged that the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was placing pressure on universities to publish in academic journals, and that this pressure might induce academics 'to produce many small-scale, non-cumulative, and not carefully thought-through research projects, contributing to low standards'. The idea that the majority of educational researchers might be 'engaged in the production of trivia' (1998: 79) to satisfy the demands of the RAE was obviously a cause for concern, yet Tooley's antipathy towards what he called 'partisanship concerning political reform' (1998: 29) suggests that he considered the critique of education policy to be somehow trivial, which is a highly controversial stance. Indeed, a striking feature of the report is Tooley's predilection to question the validity of studies that criticised the marketisation of education: for example, Tooley (1998: 56) described as 'contentious' one researcher's claim that the introduction of market principles into the education system had made matters worse for vulnerable children, and he flatly rejected another researcher's claim that the Conservative's reforms had introduced 'self-seeking and ultimately selfish individualism' into society, and that this had had a 'devastating effect on schools and teachers' (1998: 53). In response to another researcher's criticism of the 'profit and loss account'

in education, Tooley defended the Conservative record, stating that ‘under the Conservatives, no state school has ever been managed for *profit*’ (1998: 29; italics in original). Furthermore, Tooley (1998: 56) appeared to be deeply suspicious of what he described as ‘the adulation of great thinkers’: for example, he took issue with one researcher’s use of Bourdieu’s theory to analyse the domination of subordinate groups in society, stating:

One fear may be that writing about Bourdieu removes any onus on the researcher to look for anything which could be useful for classroom practice, extending educational access, raising achievement, etc., because she always has the consolation that she is making a contribution to the development of theory. Others must judge whether this development of theory is in itself valuable. (Tooley, 1998: 61)

Tooley’s scepticism over the value of such research is plain to see, and ultimately his report is a celebration of research into “what works” in the classroom, and a denigration of research that does not aim to enhance school performance. Chris Woodhead, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools in England, wrote an introduction to Tooley’s report in which he expressed Ofsted’s commitment to ‘help raise standards in the classroom’, and Woodhead endorsed Tooley’s attack on the ‘irrelevance and distraction’ of much publically funded educational research (Woodhead in Tooley, 1998: 1). Thus, it would appear that by 1998, the belief that the majority of British educational researchers were failing in their duty to help raise standards in the classroom had become the orthodoxy.

New Labour’s response to the call for research into “what works”

New Labour responded with enthusiasm to the call-to-arms for research into “what works” in schools: for example, in 1999 the ESRC launched a ‘Teaching and Learning Research Initiative’, and the DfEE established a National Educational Research Forum to forge policies regarding the future direction of Educational Research, and in 2001 the Education Panel of the RAE was restructured to include ‘user group’ (teacher) representation (Elliott & Doherty, 2001: 211). Identifying “what works” was, for New Labour, only half the battle: Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett, promised that the findings of publically funded educational research would be widely disseminated and put to good use, stating, ‘Knowledge is power, and a power increasingly – and

encouragingly – in the hands of the many and not the few’ (Blunkett, in the ESRC Annual Report, 1999-2000: 3). Thus, in 2000, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) funded the EPPI-Centre to be a centre for Evidence Informed Policy & Practice in Education, and to date the EPPI-Centre has supported 23 Review Groups that have produced approximately 40 reviews on education topics (EPPI-Centre, 2010). It appears, then, that the types of research that Hargreaves (2001: 201) described as ‘intellectual obscurities masquerading as profundities’ were out of favour with New Labour, and that the government was willing to take action to ensure that the majority of educational researchers would no longer be engaged in second-rate projects at the taxpayers’ expense. It should be noted, however, that Tooley’s (1998) suggestion that educational researchers not engaged in SER/SI during the 1990s were producing self-indulgent conceptual studies is disingenuous: many academics avoided both SER/SI *and* esoteric research: for example, Michael Apple (2006: 483) shunned research into “what works”, yet was equally wary of research inspired by postmodern theory, which he felt was ‘out of touch with the conflicts and struggles that teachers, students and activists act on’.

Why resist SER?

The disinclination of educational researchers to support SER during the 1990s was, it seems, widely interpreted as a disinclination to help raise school performance. On the face of it, such resistance to school improvement was irrational and unethical: who, after all, would not want children’s education to improve? In reality, however, the apparent wisdom and justice of promoting SER is symptomatic of what Apple (2006: 468) identifies as the ‘on the ground’ alteration to the discourse on education wrought by neoliberalism: according to Apple (2006: 469), ‘Common sense is being radically altered, but not in directions that any of us on the left would find comforting’. Thus, while it may appear logical for educational researchers concerned with social justice to use SER as a means to ensure that schools offer disadvantaged pupils a good education, Elliott and Doherty (2001: 209) point out that the neoliberal mechanisms for improving the commodity value of educational outcomes are associated with the operation of the market, namely competition (parental choice), transparency (performance

indicators) and comparison (league tables), and markets, as any investor will testify, are *not* associated with equality of outcome. According to Apple (2006: 478), a national curriculum and a national testing programme are the first and most essential step towards increased marketisation in education, because they provide the mechanisms for comparative data that ‘consumers’ need to make markets work, and school performance indicators thus offer parents-as-consumers informed choice over school selection. Seen in this light, school effectiveness research is ethically dubious because it enables schools to identify the risk factors for academic failure and to market themselves to attract the “right” kind of parents with the “right” kind of children (Apple, 2006). If a school does manage to attract the “right” kind of pupils, their academic performance acts as a beacon that attracts more of the “right” pupils in a vicious circle that excludes the “wrong” kind of pupils as a matter of course, since middle class parents have the resources to ensure that their children get places in successful schools (for example, buying a house in an expensive catchment area), while working class parents do not. Thus, while common sense says that SER is good because it enhances school performance, in reality the benefits of identifying “what works” are not evenly distributed, meaning that SER cannot be unequivocally good. It is for this reason that many educational researchers have been wary of conducting SER, and it is perhaps for this same reason that Tooley (1998) felt the need to defend the Conservative’s marketisation of education whilst promoting SER.

SER and inequality

Ironically, in view of Tooley’s (1998) horror over political partisanship, educational researchers do not need to employ ‘Marxist perspectives’ (Reynolds *et al*, 1996: 133) to expose the hazards of using SER to support the marketisation of education, since the microeconomic theory that informs the free market model itself acknowledges the downside of marketisation. A central tenet of microeconomic theory is *opportunity cost*, defined by the economists Rod Hill and Tony Myatt (2010: 10) as ‘the value of the next best alternative forgone’. The idea of opportunity cost is as follows: resources are scarce; therefore if we choose to use them in one way, we cannot use them in another. The real cost of something is *what must be given up to get it*, and this cost is not always monetary.

For example, if a working class mother in a “sink estate” decides to send her child to a secondary school in the neighbouring vicinity that is better than her local “sink school”, the opportunity cost of this decision may include such things as bus fares and the lack of availability of her teenager to pick up a younger sibling from primary school. Microeconomic theory tells us that competition between businesses raises standards, but at the bottom end of the market the enhancement of provision stops when consumers cannot afford to forgo anything in order to acquire something better. If parents in a sink estate cannot afford the opportunity cost of sending their children to a better school in the neighbouring vicinity, then microeconomic theory would seem to predict that the quality of the sink school will *not* increase to the level of the better school purely as a result of competition. This economic principle partly explains why a town may contain both a Michelin-star restaurant and a “greasy spoon cafe”: while the *overall* standard of provision is enhanced through competition, it nevertheless establishes a gulf between the best and worst providers.

Margaret Thatcher, the leading figure of neoliberalism in the UK and Prime Minister at the time of the 1988 Education Reform Act, was presumably not embarrassed by the fact that the marketisation of education *must* result in inequality: a few months after she was elected leader of the Conservative Party in 1975, Thatcher gave a speech in the USA in which she declared: ‘The pursuit of equality itself is a mirage. Opportunity means nothing unless it includes the right to be unequal and of freedom to be different’ (Thatcher, 1975 in McSmith, 2010: 11). McSmith (2010: 11) pays tribute to Thatcher’s candour, comparing it with the desperation of modern politicians to appear to be compassionate whilst pursuing socially divisive policy, and school effectiveness researchers have arguably employed this same doublethink. Goldstein and Woodhouse (2000: 356) point out that the market model of education makes explicit the fact that schools which attract pupils do so to the detriment of surrounding schools, yet SER researchers have tended to posit schools as ‘non-interacting entities’ and claim that all children benefit equally from the raising of standards.

The friction between educational researchers over the value of competition between schools stems from successive governments' adoption of neoliberal economic theory, which, as its name suggests, is based on the economic liberalism that emerged during the Enlightenment. Given the enormous social and political upheavals of the intervening centuries, it is perhaps surprising that the 'classical' liberal economic theory postulated by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 is paraphrased in economics textbooks and taught as contemporary theory in schools and universities throughout the world today (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 13). The international homogeneity of economics textbooks explains, in part, the 'paradigm convergence' of thinking about the market and education, identified by Ball (2001: 48), and while international leaders appear to be happy to embrace neoliberalism, this paradigm convergence risks undermining social justice around the world, since according to Hill and Myatt (2010: 13), Adam Smith in effect turned selfishness into a virtue. The celebration of selfishness derives from *rational choice theory*, defined by Hill and Myatt (2010: 9) as 'the belief that individuals are rational, self-interested, have a stable set of internally consistent preferences, and wish to maximise their own happiness (or 'utility') given their constraints, such as the amount of time or money that they have' (2010: 9). Adam Smith postulated that competitive market forces will guide self-interest into socially useful activities, and that 'government intervention is not needed because a competitive market system naturally leads to a *harmony of interests*' (Hill and Myatt, 2010: 13). There is an obvious overlap here with Jeremy Bentham's principle of utility, discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, and it is interesting to note that while *laissez-faire* was formally abandoned in the context of British education as early as 1870, it is still being expounded in economic textbooks in Britain today. Arguably, a variant on *laissez-faire* has found its way back into the theory of education, since rational choice theory predicts that individuals will make use of education to further their self-interest, and SER is deemed to serve an important function in making sure that schools provide high quality education, so that our nation might benefit from the socially useful activities that spring up from the pursuit of self-interest. Sadly, there is little evidence of the existence of the 'harmony of interests' envisioned by Adam Smith: indeed, Hill and Myatt (2010:

17) cite a number of studies that have found that exposure to economic principles reduces cooperative behaviour, and that *laissez-faire* undermines community bonds. It seems that Adam Smith was wrong: far from creating harmony, economic *laissez-faire* increases inequality and lowers social cohesion, which in turn reduces political participation; weakens the monitoring of government; decreases government efficiency and increases corruption (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 21). Thus, while creating a market in education may produce an efficient outcome in terms of raising standards, the economic theory upon which this neoliberal policy is based tells us that it is ‘not possible to make anyone better off without making at least one person worse off’ (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 13), and as a society we all pay the price for inequality.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the wisdom and justice of identifying “what works” in education hinges upon the trustworthiness of the political idea that new interventionism is better than government involvement in the market; an idea promoted by Tony Blair (1998) in his pamphlet, *The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century*, published the year after New Labour’s election victory:

I fully recognise that the private sector, not government, is at the forefront of wealth creation and employment generation. Yet government has a vital role in promoting competitive markets, encouraging long-term research and investment, and helping to equip citizens with the skills and aspirations they need to succeed in the modern economy...Effective access to the labour market is the key to personal prosperity, and New Labour is organising government services – welfare and education – around the imperative to equip people with the personal tools to make the most of their talents at work. (Blair, 1998: 10-11)

Education, then, is supposed to equip individuals with the ‘personal tools to make the most of their talents at work’, and the marketisation of education is intended to drive up standards to support this endeavour. According to Goldstein and Woodhouse (2000: 356), SER has gone some way towards helping maximise educational performance by modelling within-school complexities, but has made almost no attempt to contextualise schools within the wider environment, and they cite research that indicates that other factors outside the control of individual

schools may explain variation between schools' test scores. This weakness in SER is mirrored in the microeconomic principles upon which new interventionism is itself based: according to Hill and Myatt (2010: 5), market fundamentalism assumes 'perfect and costless information' - much like SER - yet in reality there exist 'pervasive informational problems' which mean that 'the market economy systematically fails to produce the efficient allocation of resources' (Hill and Myatt, 2010: 5). The collapse of the banking system in 2008 is just one example of the inefficiency of free markets.

The studies of Creative Partnerships cited in Chapter Six of this thesis demonstrate that educational researchers in Britain today still enjoy the freedom to undertake research that does not support the standards agenda, and although it is clear that politicians favour the elucidation of "what works" in schools, they have not (to date) coerced educational researchers into undertaking SER exclusively. Furthermore, in spite of the political support for SER both here and abroad, politicians do not appear to hold the findings of SER "sacred", or feel duty bound to act upon them. For example, in 2002 a study in the USA by the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, *Do School Facilities Affect Academic Outcomes?*, reported that 'spatial configurations, noise, heat, cold, light and air quality obviously bear on students' and teachers' ability to perform' (Crace, 2010: 7), yet regardless of the alleged impact of school facilities on "standards", in 2010 the newly elected Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition decided not to act upon this particular finding, and cancelled New Labour's £55bn Building Schools for the Future project, which would have rebuilt dilapidated schools. This political act was, however, not necessarily prompted by a desire to move away from the standards agenda: shortly after becoming Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove (2010 a) declared that the government had 'been seized by the fierce urgency of the need to act now' in order to raise standards and increase the choice of schools on offer to parents, which arguably signals an intention to continue the marketisation of education, albeit on a reduced budget that does not permit the renovation of existing LEA schools.

The purpose of this chapter was to consider the wisdom and justice of asking what works in education, and in light of the ethical problems (identified in Part I of this thesis) that arise when attempting to use schemes such as Creative

Partnerships to assist disadvantaged pupils, the need to avoid unwittingly endorsing new interventionism through research into “what works” in the context of Creative Partnerships is significant. Arguably, educational researchers who wish to examine schemes that are aimed at children on the margins of society should avoid the production of findings that feed into performance maximisation, because performativity gives rise to the very inequality that schemes such as Creative Partnerships are supposed to address. Instead, educational researchers should perhaps aim to explore educational initiatives with a view to discovering not “what works”, but how the promotion of neoliberal theory is playing out in our schools, and to consider how things might be different.

In the following chapter, I look at some of the issues that face the researcher when considering the research design for a study of individuals’ understanding of Creative Partnerships.

Chapter Eight

Validity; Reliability; Generalisability

This chapter considers the key issues of validity, reliability and generalisability, which must be addressed prior to observing the operation of Creative Partnerships and exploring individuals' understanding of Creative Partnerships.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the wisdom and justice of asking “what works” in education were questioned on the grounds that SER supports the standards agenda and that all children do not benefit equally from competition between schools. The logical response, perhaps, would be to frame a research question that challenges the claim that schemes such as Creative Partnerships ensure parity of standards in education, but one thereby risks falling into the trap identified by Michael Apple (2006). According to Apple (2006), while many educational researchers have spoken out against the neoliberal marketisation of education, educational issues have gradually been reframed in terms of the neoliberal agenda:

The very categories themselves – markets, choice, national curricula, national testing, standards – bring the debate onto the terrain established by neo-liberals and neo-conservatives. The analysis of ‘what is’ has led to a neglect of ‘what might be’. Thus, there has been a withering of substantive large-scale discussions of feasible alternatives to neo-liberal and neo-conservative visions, policies, and practices, ones that would move well beyond them. (Apple, 2006: 482)

Thus, to talk about such things as ‘standards’ in connection with Creative Partnerships is to view education from a neoliberal perspective, and to thereby assert the authority of that perspective. However, in avoiding this particular trap the researcher risks being caught in another, because the dominance of neoliberal thinking about educational research means that research that does *not* centre on “what works” risks being judged as methodologically unsound: as noted by Oancea and Pring (2009: 17), “what works” defines the values and sets the standards against which research evidence is judged today. Furthermore, the

“what works” model has given rise to a set of preferred research practices that are ostensibly value free and efficient, such as Randomised Controlled Trials based on the medical model, systematic syntheses of research (systematic reviewing, meta-analysis), and ‘realistic evaluation’ (Oancea & Pring, 2009: 15). Although such methods play an important role in social and medical research, they are perhaps less well suited to educational research that, in the words of Oancea and Pring (2009: 19), aims to create ‘free, open normative debate’ that displaces ‘the mechanistic appeal to pre-determined standards likely to privilege the more powerful’. However, in order for such research to be taken seriously by audiences attuned to the rhetoric of performativity, its methodology must appear to be as robust as that of its “what works” rival. This, then, is the challenge faced by the educational researcher: how to devise a study of Creative Partnerships that observes the programme in operation, and explores individuals’ understanding of that programme, in a manner that both opens up debate on Creative Partnerships and demonstrates a keen awareness of the issues of validity, reliability and generalisability, which are considered vital to good practice in educational research (BERA, 2004) and which must be carefully considered in order to minimise the risk of non-SER research being dismissed as ‘second-rate’ (Hargreaves, 1996:7).

As Fleming *et al* (2004: 178) note, ‘arguments about research methods can be tedious’. This chapter does not aim, therefore, to provide an exhaustive account of the arguments for and against various research methods. Instead, it examines the key issues of validity, reliability and generalisability, and considers how they might be addressed through research design, prior to my empirical enquiry into individuals’ understanding of Creative Partnerships.

Validity

When thinking about research design for a study of individuals’ understanding of Creative Partnerships, it is first necessary to consider the possibility that the research process itself, whether it consists of individual interviews or group discussions, may cause individuals to express opinions that they did not consciously hold prior to the interview or conversation. For example, any discussion of Creative Partnerships is likely to necessitate the discussion of

“creativity”, as defined by the NACCCE report (1999). As a discourse, creativity floats around as an incoherent jumble of stories - what Banaji et al (2006) refer to as ‘rhetorics’ – and is made into something “real” at the moment it is purposely interrogated, becoming meaningful when it is assigned meaning as part of this conscious effort in response to a specific stimulus. According to Cleeremans (2001: 7), studies of implicit learning have found that the relationships between ensembles of consciously processed stimuli remain purportedly unconscious, and we must therefore ‘carefully distinguish between awareness during encoding and awareness during retrieval of information’. In other words, our accounts of phenomena may be the product of mental processes over which we have no conscious control. When putting forward an account of creativity, an individual may automatically silence conflicting rhetorics in his or her own mind in order to tailor the account to fit the occasion. This, of course, raises a problem for the researcher: if individuals unconsciously organise their thoughts and impressions so as to maximise the coherency of their account of a phenomenon at the point of its articulation, and if this articulation is stimulated by the researcher, then how can we have faith in the “authenticity” of these accounts?

The issue of validity, or the ‘measure of the confidence in, credibility of or plausibility of a piece of research’ (Wellington, 2000:201), is clearly of concern when devising an empirical study of individuals’ understanding of Creative Partnerships, but it would perhaps be a mistake to assume that conceptualisations, because they lack a fixed external referent, are not grounded in “real” experience, and that interviewees’ accounts of things such as creativity are crafted out of thin air in response to the researcher’s questions. In his discussion of the social research theory of Peter Winch, Smeyers (2006) considers the circular relationship between research subjects’ lived experience and the language through which that experience is articulated:

Invoking Wittgenstein, Winch draws attention to the fact that one cannot make a sharp distinction between ‘the world’ and ‘the language in which we try to describe the world’, and argues that it is therefore wrong to say that the problems of philosophy arise out of language rather than out of the world: ‘Because in discussing language philosophically we are in fact discussing *what counts as belonging to the world*. Our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language we use. The concepts we have settle for us the form of the experience we have of the world. (Smeyers, 2006: 467-468)

Language, it appears, both conditions our perception of our world and is shaped by our experience in the world. I would argue, therefore, that while the discussion of creativity necessitates the fabrication of accounts of creativity, these accounts are a blend of “stories” and personal experience, and as such offer the researcher insight, both into how existing rhetorics of creativity condition individuals’ interpretation of their experience of the world (for example, pupils’ perception of drama workshops), and how experience compels individuals to craft a particular account from an array of “stories” in order to articulate that experience (for example, selecting and adjusting the story of creativity as a vehicle for social engagement in order to express the sense of community developed through drama workshops).

The problem of validity is, however, complicated by the issue of “researcher effect”, which may be defined as the researcher’s influence on the accounts of phenomena offered in the research context. The recent discovery of mirror neurons has shed light upon the human tendency to imitate other people through a process described by Byrne (2005: 499) as ‘social mirroring’. According to Byrne (2005: 499), social mirroring involves the unconscious synchronisation of actions in order to demonstrate mutual identification or empathy by showing ‘the other that one is ‘in tune’ with them’. Both the researcher and the respondent may unintentionally adjust their stance towards each other, and while it is not yet clear whether the mirroring of actions is related to the synchronisation of opinions, a relationship between the two is, I would argue, not unlikely given our understanding of “copycat” behaviour. The copying of emotional states and attendant behaviour may be attested to through events such as the 175% rise in railway suicides among 15-19 -year-olds that occurred both during and after the broadcasting of a German television series, *Death of a Student*, which depicted the railway suicide of a 19-year-old man at the start of each episode; an effect that was repeated when the series was shown again some years later (Hawton & Williams, 2005: 297). It is possible, therefore, that in meeting individuals face-to-face, the researcher will inadvertently model attitudes towards Creative Partnerships that are then “mirrored” back, making the findings a reflection of the researcher’s, rather than the interviewee’s, beliefs about Creative Partnerships. Byrne (2005), however, points out that social mirroring does not occur in all situations, and is less likely to occur when there is a gulf

between parties (for example, age; gender; social class). Hawton and Williams (2005) also note that viewers of *Death of a Student* who were older than the actor portraying the suicide did not copy him. This raises an interesting dilemma for the researcher: it is popularly held in textbooks on research design (see for example, Cohen & Manion, 1989: 318) that matching interviewer characteristics with those of the sample being interviewed reduces bias, on the grounds that misunderstandings are less likely to arise when both parties are alike and are not, therefore, talking at cross purposes. If this is the case, then the researcher must choose between two options: either recruit interviewers similar to the interviewees, and thereby reduce the risk of misunderstandings arising between parties (but increase the risk of social mirroring), or recruit interviewers different from the interviewees, and thereby reduce the risk of social mirroring (but increase the risk of misunderstandings).

In spite of this supposed dilemma, I would argue that the researcher need not be overly preoccupied with the influence of either social mirroring or conversational misunderstandings on the validity of his or her data. Both of these phenomena occur in everyday human interaction, and the fact that we are able to communicate with all sorts of people in our daily lives (for example, our friends' toddlers; elderly neighbours; adolescents in the shopping mall) suggests that we are equipped to handle interaction with people both similar and dissimilar to us without becoming "clones" or leaving one another totally baffled. Indeed, Weizman (1999: 837) claims that 'apparent miscommunication' is exploited by speakers to 'build up to an implicit mutual understanding between them', in a process that draws upon speakers' similarities *and* differences to produce mutually satisfying discourse. Given the apparent prevalence of social mirroring between similar parties and misunderstandings between divergent parties, we may assume that both are integral to human interaction, making their avoidance in the research context unfeasible. Further, we might ask whether avoiding researcher affect might be undesirable, since it may *reduce* validity if the resultant dialogue is far removed from everyday interaction.

The problem of validity also has implications for data analysis, discussed later.

Reliability

Validity is bound up with the issue of reliability, or the consistency of research findings (Wellington, 2000: 200). Put simply, if another researcher replicates my study, will his or her findings be the same as mine? The issue of reliability is of paramount importance when researchers seek to make definite claims (for example, that class size affects pupils' academic attainment), and we are no doubt justified in feeling uncomfortable with educational policy based upon research findings that cannot be independently verified. However, while reliability is crucial in some research contexts, I would argue that the over-zealous quest for reliability in the context of a study of individuals' understanding of Creative Partnerships might impact negatively on the validity of that study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) are highly critical of what they believe to be the misapplication of the scientific method for the study of the social world, and they challenge in particular the belief that reliability, because it is important to scientific enquiry, must also be important to other kinds of empirical enquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 299) suggest, in fact, that *unreliability* may be a significant part of what the researcher is trying to explore, and that unreliability is rendered "invisible" through research methods designed to maximise a study's reliability.

To illustrate this point, we might consider the use of the postal questionnaire as a research instrument. On the face of it, the optimal method for the study of individuals' understanding of Creative Partnerships is the postal questionnaire, which removes the problem of both social mirroring and - if carefully worded and piloted - the problem of conversational misunderstandings. Furthermore, the same questionnaire may be posted by any researcher to any member of a similar group (discussed later) to produce similar results, thereby confirming the validity of the original enquiry. However, while the questionnaire is useful as a means to uncover individuals' beliefs about tangible matters (for example, whether individuals would prefer to live in a house, flat or bungalow), is perhaps less well suited to exploring beliefs about things that have no fixed external referent. In order to generate "tick box" questions about such things as creativity that all the respondents are able to answer, and in order to be confident that all the respondents are answering the questions with the same concept in mind, the researcher must - either directly or indirectly - define the concept of

creativity. Any “unreliability”, or uncertainty, about just what is under discussion is thereby excluded from the study, making the questionnaire perhaps an inappropriate tool for the study of what is posited from the outset as a nebulous construct.

Although face-to-face conversation allows the researcher to explore unreliability, the one-off nature of human interaction - replete as it is with social mirroring and misunderstandings - means that it may be difficult for a researcher employing free-flowing dialogue to have his or her research taken seriously. After all, if a subsequent researcher cannot raise the same conversation about Creative Partnerships, how do we know that the first researcher did not simply make it all up? For some researchers, this question is redundant: rather than attempt to prove that they are “telling the truth,” exponents of fiction as a research method embrace unreliability; declare human interaction to be non-replicable, and offer narratives and short stories as ‘versions of the truth which are woven from an amalgam of raw data, real details and (where necessary) *symbolic equivalents*’ (Clough, 2002:9; italics in original). This approach is useful in that it enables researchers to produce findings that are not dependent upon reliability for their validity, since they are exploring ‘the greater truth’ (Butor in Bridges, 2003: 91) hidden beneath the surface reality explored by other researchers using more conventional methods.

However, the use of fiction as a research method raises an interesting question: in what way is a non-replicable conversation equivalent to a fictitious conversation? I would argue that our reluctance to agree that there is no difference between the two is evidence of our tendency to distinguish between reportage and fantasy. Confirmation of this tendency may be found, somewhat paradoxically, in the ambivalence towards the issue of reliability displayed by some advocates of fiction as research. For example, Clough (2002: 90) invokes “the same river cannot be stepped into twice” argument in defence of the non-replicability of the empirical enquiry that inspires his short stories, stating that:

...events are unique by definition, and however identical in the phenomenal setting, their participants or their aims, it remains that consciousness is indispensably variable in its presence at the event, and no two events can share that constitution. (Clough, 2002: 90; italics in original)

On the other hand, Clough also makes an appeal to what might be termed “the common human condition” to defend the validity of his findings, claiming that fictional accounts of educational phenomena may ‘speak to the heart of social consciousness’ (Clough, 2002: 8). But how, we might ask, can consciousness be at once ‘indispensably variable’ and have a communal ‘heart’? Clearly, Clough is not willing to let go of the claim that he is “telling the truth,” even though by his own admission he is not. No doubt Clough’s use of realism in his writing is deliberate, and is intended to convey the truthfulness of the experience that he re-tells as fiction: researchers who employ storytelling appear to be well aware of our ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality, and deliberately attempt to establish a connection between their stories and their readers’ real-world experience by grounding their fiction in the realm of the possible, rather than the fantastical (see, for example, the short stories written in the wake of 9/11 by the researchers Karen Scott-Hoy, 2002 and Patricia Geist Martin, 2002). For these authors, fiction *depends*, for its effect, on our shared understanding of what is, and is not, “realistic”. For this reason, fictional research arguably confirms the validity of non-fictional; non-replicable research. After all, if authors of fictional research are able to claim validity for their studies through an appeal to our shared social consciousness that enables us, by and large, to determine what is and is not plausible, then why should we doubt the ability of readers to assess the credibility of non-fictional research, purely on the grounds that genuine human interaction cannot be easily replicated?

Of course, our shared social consciousness is not foolproof - while it may alert us to the absurdity of extreme research claims (for example, that working class parents do not care about their children’s education), the notorious Sokal hoax of 1996 suggests that we are prone to believing more plausible lies, and that a piece of research may chime with public sentiment yet still be spurious. How then, might a researcher demonstrate that his or her study is not bogus? A solution favoured by some researchers (see for example Cohen & Manion, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is to seek what is known as respondent or member validation, by offering research participants the opportunity to confirm or deny statements/actions that they made during the interview/observation. The key difference between fictional and non-fictional research is that the latter offers independent researchers the potential to track down respondents, and even if an

original conversation about Creative Partnerships cannot be replicated, at least the respondents can confirm the accuracy of the reported conversation. In reality however, the confidentiality usually afforded respondents (see BERA, 2004) means that their subsequent detection is difficult, if not impossible, and the reader must simply take it on trust that member validation did occur. Even if, as an additional precaution, multiple researchers confer with one another to reach consensus over data, the reader must still take it on trust that these researchers did not conspire to distort the interview transcripts/observation records. However, for some exponents of member validation, the issue of trust is not overly problematic: even without the independent corroboration of the “eye witness”, the researcher may still claim validity for his or her study through recourse to an argument similar to that employed by exponents of fiction as research:

The case study builds on the reader’s tacit knowledge, presenting a holistic and life-like description that is like those that the readers normally encounter in their experiencing of the world, rather than being mere symbolic abstractions of such. Readers thus receive a measure of *vicarious* experience; were they to be magically set down in the context of the enquiry they would have a feeling of *déjà vu*. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 359; italics in original)

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985: 359), the rich description of the interplay between the enquirer and the respondents enables readers to become “present” at the event, and since member validation places the enquirer and the respondents on an equal footing (because the data is “owned” by both parties), readers are able to draw upon their tacit knowledge to reach their own conclusions about the truthfulness of a study, almost like members of a jury assessing the truthfulness of a witness statement. Interestingly, although Lincoln and Guba (1985: 299) eschew the quest for reliability in non-scientific research, the qualitative enquiry they promote appears to offer a form of reliability, because every reading of the enquiry is couched as an *experience* of that enquiry. Under Lincoln and Guba’s method, member validation is replicated time and time again in the minds of the readers, who are cast as participants with the power to confirm or reject the truthfulness of data. Ultimately, however, member validated research that cannot be independently corroborated is no less problematic than fictional research: as stated previously, something may appear to be plausible yet still be false.

In addition to the problem of the trustworthiness of raw data, member validation raises a problem with regard to the analysis of data. In promoting an egalitarian spirit of inquiry, member validation is said to minimise the exploitation of respondents, since they are empowered to veto any part of a study that casts them in an improper light, and for this reason it is considered good practice to offer respondents the opportunity to review their interview transcripts/observation record (see BERA, 2004). But who, we might ask, has the right to veto *interpretations* of data? As stated previously, validity is an issue that affects both data collection and data analysis, and member validation may potentially threaten the validity of a study if respondents are given the power to censor the ‘researcher’s gloss’ (Bryman, 2009: 2), or if researchers, fearful of causing anger or distress to their respondents, offer interpretations of data primarily designed to please them (Bryman, 2006: 79). Of course, the validity of an enquiry may also be compromised by the researcher’s misinterpretation of data, and the employment of both member validation and researcher cross-checking might therefore prevent erroneous conclusions being drawn from poorly understood material. The ethical guidelines published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004) make it clear that, while it is merely desirable for researchers to de-brief participants at the end of a piece of research, it is forbidden for researchers to falsify, distort or sensationalize research evidence or findings (2004: 12). According to BERA (2004: 13), researchers must make their data and methods ‘amenable to reasonable external scrutiny’ so that readers are not forced to take it on trust that inferences are justified, and to prevent the cloak of respondent anonymity being used to wilfully misrepresent research findings. Thus, while researchers are free to decide the scope of member validation, they may not claim a privileged insight that offers them *carte blanche* to interpret data any way they choose.

Generalisability

The quality of evidence demanded by BERA (2004) in support of research claims is entwined with the issue of generalisability, defined by Wellington (2000: 197) as ‘the extent to which research findings in one context can be transferred or applied to other contexts or settings’. It is widely held that if the sample used in a

study does not capture the variation that occurs in the population under scrutiny, then researchers cannot claim that their findings, however insightful with regards to a particular context, shed much light upon educational experience elsewhere (Robson, 1997: 72; Bryman, 2006: 35). Various sample size calculators are available online to assist researchers in determining how large a randomly selected sample needs to be in order for it to be representative (see for example, www.surveysystems.com), and the numbers required are often large: for example, when the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL, 2009) wanted to discover the extent of the abuse of teachers by parents and pupils, they surveyed 1,000 school and college staff. However, the transfer of findings across cases is only one aspect of generalisability: of equal importance is the extent to which data recordings used by the researcher are representative of the full *range* of beliefs held by the respondents (Freebody, 2003: 24). As stated previously, researchers may decide that a questionnaire containing a fixed number of questions is not an appropriate method of enquiry into a conceptualisation, and they may choose instead to adopt an approach based, for example, upon Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory, in which they mine a seam of data until it is exhausted and no new beliefs are expressed by respondents. For practical reasons it would be difficult for the solo researcher employing this method to uncover the full range of beliefs amongst a representative sample of randomly selected school children, given that the target population is comprised of thousands of children spread across hundreds of miles, and it is therefore likely that he or she would opt instead for an in-depth, localised enquiry that privileges generalisability within, rather than across, cases.

No matter how meticulous in its attention to detail, a study that is based on a non-representative sample may still face the charge of being of limited interest, since the researcher's claims are specific to a particular scenario, rather than the world at large. However, Freebody (2003: 22-33) offers a way around this apparent impasse by citing Wootton's (1997) longitudinal case study of a little girl's linguistic development. According to Freebody, Wootton was able to claim that his study was generalisable, *not* because his single participant was taken to stand in for all children, but because the practices that were recorded and analysed were representative of other people's practices: a claim that Wootton supported by 'articulating the study with *other studies and traditions* of study in the general

area' (Freebody, 2003: 25; italics in original). Under Wootton's account, researchers do not need to employ a representative sample in order to ensure the generalisability of their findings, since generalisability may be proven through the identification of the ways in which the findings (for example individuals' views on Creative Partnerships) are compatible with existing research into other phenomena (such as individuals' views on creativity in general). Wootton is not alone in expressing the belief that behaviour exhibited in one context may share features with behaviour exhibited in other contexts: according to Ellis and Bochner (2000: 751), 'Our lives are particular, but they also are typical and generalizable, since we all participate in a limited number of cultures and institutions'. If Ellis and Bochner are correct, it is almost inevitable that individuals sharing a culture (for example, English secondary schooling) will be exposed to common experiences, and a school would need to be wildly idiosyncratic before the findings of a case study performed there could be dismissed as completely irrelevant to the discussion of school experience in general.

In the end, Wellington (2000:197) cautions that no findings, not even those based on a statistical sample, can be generalised with complete certainty, and we may therefore decide to agree with Fendler (2006: 448) that empirical enquiry ought not to be dedicated to the pursuit of universal truths about education, but should instead be viewed as a means to contribute something new for us to learn, whether that be through a national survey or a single case study.

Conclusion

BERA (2004) rightly flags up the importance of validity, reliability and generalisability in educational research, and in this chapter I hope to have demonstrated that the rigorous demands of the research community are not incompatible with the investigation of individuals' understanding of Creative Partnerships. Fleming *et al* (2004) note the widespread practice of including a 'disclaimer' in research papers and theses that points out the limitations of the study, presumably before these limitations are seized upon by avid readers, and it is no doubt tempting to include such a disclaimer when beginning to even *think* about how to study something as vague as individuals' understanding of Creative

Partnerships, given the threats to validity posed by issues such as social mirroring and conversational misunderstandings. However, Fleming *et al* (2004: 177) warn that disclaimers attached to studies beg the question ‘what then was the point?’, and for this reason, rather than apologise for the limitations of a particular enquiry, it is perhaps better to acknowledge from the outset that *all* knowledge claims are problematic, but that these problems are not insurmountable. The justification offered for fictional research provides us with compelling evidence of our ability to operate rationally in the world, in spite of our tendency to encounter ambiguity, and even occasionally to get things wrong.

The following justification for fictional research, offered by Griffiths and Macleod (2008), encapsulates everything that I hope to have argued for in this chapter:

In ordinary life we listen to and tell auto/biographies all the time. We need to judge how far the stories we hear are accurate and told with sincerity. We know, and indeed expect, them to be partial, self-serving, entertaining, persuasive and to draw on imperfect memories. All this is an inevitable part of understanding the unique and the particular, the singular, individual voice. And it is routinely understood, as individual voices are, with the aid of intelligence and wisdom drawn partly from personal experience and partly from knowledge gained from other sources. (Griffiths & Macleod, 2008: 131)

According to Griffiths and Macleod, although we can be deceived by falsehoods, we are equipped to evaluate the stories we are told by drawing on our own experience of what is true, and by comparing what we are told with evidence drawn from other sources, and in this respect educational research is no different from our everyday interaction. In spite of BERA’s (2004) ban on the distortion, falsification or sensationalisation of research findings, the reader must, ultimately, take a leap of faith that a research paper or thesis is not a total fabrication, but this is not a leap in the dark. Our shared social consciousness, as identified by Clough (2002), alerts us to the absurdity of preposterous research claims, while the rich description and member validation recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985), when coupled with the articulation of a study with other studies and traditions of study in the general area, as recommended by Wootton (1997), permits the reader to reach his/her own conclusion over the strength of the research claims. And, as Clough (2002) observes, we have little reason to doubt our ability to evaluate

evidence and reach conclusions: it is, after all, part of our daily experience of being human.

In the following chapter, I present my empirical enquiry into Creative Partnerships.

Chapter Nine

What sense do pupils, teachers and artists make of Creative Partnerships?

This chapter reports on an empirical enquiry that aims to further our understanding of Creative Partnerships by asking, what sense do pupils, teachers and artists make of Creative Partnerships?

Introduction

This chapter reports on an empirical enquiry that aims to further our understanding of Creative Partnerships by asking, what sense do pupils, teachers and artists make of Creative Partnerships? Having examined New Labour's educational policy, and critiques of that policy, I had expected to go into schools involved with Creative Partnerships and encounter means-end rationality dressed up as creative experience. Indeed, this was what other educational researchers had professed to find: for example, Turner-Bisset (2007) concludes that educational schemes that aim to promote creativity, as defined by the 1999 NACCCE report, are *not* creative, and are in fact as highly prescriptive as schemes designed to drive up standards, such as the National Literacy Strategy. However, what I had failed to anticipate prior to my empirical enquiry was how peculiar I would find Creative Partnerships in practice, and how perplexed I would be by my encounter with individuals involved with the programme. My experience of Creative Partnerships is best captured through reference to Lewis Carroll's (1871) playful study of logic, *Through the Looking-Glass*. W.H. Auden (1943/1988) identifies a fundamental difference between Lewis Carroll's novels, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*; novels which, at first glance, appear to describe identically chaotic worlds:

...the Looking-Glass world...is not, like Wonderland, a place of complete anarchy where everybody says and does whatever comes into his head, but a completely determined world without choice. Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the Lion and the Unicorn, the Red Knight and the White, must fight at regular intervals, irrespective of their feelings. In Wonderland, Alice has to adjust herself to a life without laws; in Looking-Glass Land, to one governed by laws to which she is unaccustomed. She has to learn, for example, to walk away from a place in order to reach it, or to run fast in order to remain where she is. In Wonderland, she is the only person with self-control; in Looking-Glass Land, the only competent one. (W.H. Auden, 1943/1988: 50)

While it is for others to judge my competence as a data collector (as discussed in the previous chapter), it is hoped that the parallel between the Looking-Glass Land's 'completely determined world without choice' and England's completely determined educational world without choice, replete as it is with compulsory standard assessment tasks (SATs), league tables, literacy and numeracy targets, and so on, might easily be recognised by my readers. It is my hope that, if this parallel is recognised, then some of the encounters reported in this enquiry will enable readers (after the theory of Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to experience the peculiarity of Creative Partnerships for themselves, without dismissing that experience as eccentric.

This present chapter is divided into three sections: Section A details an observation of Creative Partnerships training, planning and implementation; Section B details an observation of pupils' follow-up lessons; Section C details interviews with research participants; Section D offers a discussion of the findings. The observation data from my empirical enquiry are presented through a process of *recollection and reflection*. Excerpts from my research diary are reproduced, followed by brief reflections upon those excerpts, in order to capture the immediate experience of CP and my subsequent consideration of that experience prior to a fuller discussion of the findings in Section D.

Creative Partnerships is referred to as 'CP' from here onwards.

SECTION A: Observation of CP training; planning and implementation

Background to my data collection

My data collection began in September 2008, and coincided with the launch of the new National Curriculum. Announced on 12th July 2007, the new National Curriculum was intended to make learning and teaching less prescriptive and more creative, and its announcement came shortly after my PhD proposal had been approved by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). My initial (selfish) reaction to the announcement of the new curriculum was fear that it would render the aim of my PhD enquiry obsolete; a concern that escalated when ongoing discontent amongst the teaching unions meant that, on 14th November 2008, SATs for 14-year-olds were abolished. Rather than go into detail about my original PhD idea, suffice it to say it was necessary to rethink my enquiry due to the shifting sands of education policy. Aside from the change in direction of education policy (ostensibly away from the narrow pursuit of standards towards something more creative) I was faced with a practical concern: on the 3rd November 2008 a new independent organisation was announced – Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) – which would take over delivery of CP from the Arts Council England on 1st April 2009, with funding in place until 2011. Consequently, I was forewarned by my local CP in September 2008 that they would be relocating offices in April, and would therefore not be running the usual quota of projects during that academic year, and that the CP workforce might be downsized. My original plan had been to work closely with a particular branch of CP from September 2008 until July 2009, in order to gain a sense of how projects are conceived, developed, implemented and assessed. My data collection could not, it seems, have come at a worse time.

It was necessary for me to gather data during what was a difficult period for CP, in order to complete my project within the timescale imposed by my funding body, and my local CP workers were extremely generous in helping me achieve this aim at a time when they faced upheaval and insecurity. I had intended to observe CP projects conducted in at least three secondary schools across the two Local Education Authorities covered by my local CP, but it quickly became apparent that this was not going to be possible. Although three secondary schools

had expressed interest in running CP projects, by Christmas 2008 two of these schools had dropped out: I was informed by my local CP contact that one school had cancelled its CP project because pupils were ‘displaying severely disruptive behaviour’, and the other school had cancelled its CP project because some of its staff ‘didn’t believe in creativity’. I was left, therefore with one secondary school that *might* let me observe its CP project and talk to staff and pupils. It would be difficult to overstate the gratitude I felt towards the deputy head of Church Road Secondary School (not its real name) for granting me permission, on 5th March 2009, to study the operation of CP within her school.

The sample

Church Road Secondary School is located in the north of England, in a small market town that was at one time a Celtic settlement; a Roman fort; a refuge for monks fleeing the Viking raids, and the site of the first translation of the Gospels into English. It was destroyed by the Normans, along with the whole region, which was dismissed in the Domesday Book with the phrase *hoc est vasta*: ‘this is waste’. The town’s fortunes revived in the seventeenth century with the intensive development of the coal industry, which continued into the twentieth century. By 1923, 170,000 miners were employed in the coal industry across the county: today there are no working collieries in the region. Margaret Thatcher, whose neoliberal economic policy had laid waste to northern industry in a latter-day version of the Norman Conquest, visited the region in 1987 and responded to questions about the area’s high unemployment by delivering a homily on ‘moaning minnies’ (Mc Smith, 2010: 11). In spite of the community’s social and economic difficulties, Church Road Secondary School is successful: it describes itself as ‘an oversubscribed, DCSF-designated high performing school which has both leading edge and language college status’. The school’s last Ofsted report concluded that Church Road Secondary School is ‘a very effective school. It is led with vision and energy. A strong focus on how well pupils learn shines through all activities’.

In addition to observing and interviewing pupils at Church Road Secondary School, I interviewed a sample of adults, selected as follows:

- Five creative practitioners employed on the Church Road CP project.
- A ‘creative agent’ recommended to me by staff at my local CP, but who was not involved with the Church Road CP project.
- A local artist that I met at a conference. This artist teaches graphic design at a college of further education and has never heard of CP. My aim here was to record the opinions of a CP “outsider”, and thereby throw into sharper relief the views on creativity and the arts expressed by individuals involved with CP.

As a point of clarification, a ‘creative agent’ is someone hired by CP who acts as a link between the school and its local CP. The creative agent helps the school to devise a CP project, and finds appropriate ‘creative practitioners’ to run the activities. The Church Road CP project was unusual, in that the school chose to work with a particular group of creative practitioners under the leadership of Ms X, and did not avail itself of the services of a creative agent. (Church Road Secondary School had worked with Ms X previously on a project not connected with CP.)

All procedures prescribed by the BERA code of ethics were followed throughout.

Training session 1: Teachers

Time constraints meant that, long before knowing whether or not Church Road Secondary School would grant me access, it was necessary for me to begin the process of observing how CP projects develop. My first step, therefore, was to attend a training session for teachers on how to apply for CP funding, held in a local library. Although this session was not attended by staff from Church Road Secondary School, I was later informed by CP staff that they had attended something similar. The training session was held on 13th October 2008; the day that the Royal Bank of Scotland asked the government for an emergency bail-out (indeed, the unfolding economic crisis formed the back-drop to my entire data collection).

Diary entry, 13th October 2008

At the start of the training session our instructor asked, 'What do we mean by Creative Learning?' In order to answer this question, we were split into groups and given slips of paper. A statement had been printed onto each slip, and we were asked to arrange the statements in a diamond pattern, with the most important statement at the top and the least important at the bottom. My group was made up of two primary school teachers and an arts education co-ordinator, and they decided that the statement, 'Teachers teach and young people learn', had nothing to do with Creative Learning and was not at all desirable and should therefore be at the bottom of the diamond. They spent some time discussing the statement, 'Creative Learning tends not to happen because of pressures of league tables and Ofsted'; they felt that this was true and was lamentable, and placed it in the centre of the diamond. Although my group expressed the belief that teachers should not 'just teach while pupils learn', they were very opposed to the statement, 'Creative Learning should be revolutionary'. One of the primary school teachers said that she would not want her pupils to 'question the status quo', and her colleague agreed. The arts education co-ordinator said that if the word 'revolutionary' is taken to mean 'ever revolving' it is okay, but if it is taken to mean that children need to reject everything that has gone before, then it is not okay. In the end they decided to put this statement towards the bottom of the diamond. The primary school teachers said that the children in their primary school 'don't know anything': they said that one 10-year-old girl had returned from a trip to Florida and 'didn't know she had been to America', while another Year Six pupil 'thought that London was in Belfast'.

Our instructor had a flip chart and recorded each group's answers onto a diamond grid, pointing out that there were 'no right or wrong answers.' By and large, the groups produced similar rankings for the statements. Of particular concern was the issue of league tables and Ofsted. For example, a lady from another group said, 'Creativity touches children's souls' but everyone is preoccupied with results: 'If you can't deliver outcomes, nobody is interested'. The teachers seemed to agree that the pressure to meet government targets

puts teachers off taking risks and being creative. The instructor then announced that Creative Learning has 'enquiry and research at the heart of the experience' and stressed the importance of form filling, saying that it enables CP to 'show the government that money is being well spent'.

After lunch we broke into school-based groups so that the creative agents could discuss the funding bids with the teachers to whom they had been assigned. The instructor handed round sample proposal forms and asked each group to write their CP research question on a large sheet of paper. We were then asked to move around the tables, reading each other's research question and jotting down our comments on the sheets. We were asked to consider such things as ethics; feasibility; measurement of outcome; relevance, and 'whether the research question is open or closed'. The proposed projects (for both primary and secondary schools) ranged from how to use non-standard teaching space more creatively to how to increase pupils' writing skills.

The training session concluded with a presentation on evaluation, in which our instructor stressed the need to gather evidence to answer a research question in order to 'promote what we have achieved; share; learn from mistakes and promote better practice next time', and she suggested that we give pupils Post-It notes at the end of each session to gather feedback on CP projects.

Reflection

Two things in particular struck me about this training session: first, consistent with Turner-Bisset's (2007: 193) observation that initiatives on creativity do not herald major change in primary education, but are instead 'performativity by stealth', the primary school teachers at the training session seemed completely at ease with the fact that Creative Partnerships' projects must be target driven, and must be accompanied by copious paperwork to 'show the government that money is being well spent'. None of the teachers questioned the contradiction between government directives that, in their own words 'put teachers off being creative', and the government's hunger for evidence that Creative Partnerships 'promotes better practice'. Adorno (2006 a: 125) is critical of the 'blind complacency on the

part of the subject encouraged to be spontaneous', and a lack of clear-sightedness was evident amongst the teachers, who did not want their pupils to 'question the status quo' yet longed to escape from the straightjacket of the standards agenda, and who failed to see the irony of government-endorsed schemes that instruct teachers in how to be spontaneous and creative. Second, the primary teachers' claim that their pupils 'don't know anything' is sadly reminiscent of Friedrich Engels' (1845/1976: 396) account of the 'abysmal ignorance of the English working classes': the Year 6 pupil's belief that 'London was in Belfast' would not have been incongruous in the Victorian Sunday school, where 'you will find boys who have never heard of such a place as London' (Engels, 1845/1976: 397).

Training session 2: Creative Agents

On 19th January 2009, I attended a CP training session for creative agents, 'From Programme Plan to Project Planning – Formulating the Enquiry', led by an instructor from CAPE UK. 18 creative agents attended the session, held at a venue in a major city in the region.

Diary entry, 19th January 2009

Our instructor began his presentation with a discussion of CARA, a CAPE UK study of 'patterns of impact' of creative activity. He claimed that the patterns of impact varied: the greatest impact was in special schools, then primary, then secondary. Our instructor illustrated this phenomenon with diagrams of circles within circles: minimal impact was represented by a single circle with the school's name at its centre. Next our instructor asked, 'What is enquiry?' and he then explained that what counts as enquiry varies widely, for example 'action research; judge; measure', and so on. He said that 'people make it up as they go along, like the Bank of England.' Everyone laughed. Our instructor suggested that we look at CURE, the Centre for Using Research in Education (a group based in Coventry that gives research advice). We were told to avoid "why" questions, and go for "how" instead.

Next, we were asked to get into pairs and come up with our question for this year; put our question on a flipchart and then go around the room, writing our comments on other people's flip charts. We were invited to adopt a 'professional questioning stance'. Our instructor asked, 'How does CP disseminate good practice between/amongst all interested parties? Parents; practitioners; future employers: they don't know about CP but could make good contributions to CP.' I was partnered with a lady, and we wrote down her question, 'How does CP help learning technology in school?' We then visited the other flipcharts. The other questions included, 'How does CP enhance the school?'; 'What would be the impact of altering the structure of the school day?' Our instructor showed us a PowerPoint slide with some guidance to help us evaluate the questions:

- Is it clear what it means?
- Can you improve it?
- Are the terms well defined?
- Are there any unchecked assumptions?

As we moved between flipcharts, our instructor also asked us to consider, 'What is the through line; is it rich, worth exploring; what would be the purpose of finding it out; can information be collected in an attempt to answer the question; are there any potential ethical problems; is it too large/small for time and budget?' We noted our comments on the flipcharts, and then reviewed the comments on our own flipchart. Our instructor asked us to amend our question in light of other people's comments, and to read out the original and amended questions. The creative agent that I was partnered with changed her question to, 'How might the creative journey impact on how students retrieve information?'

Next, our instructor played us a video made by CP Nottingham, which was about how an entire primary school devised, rehearsed and performed a piece of theatre/music/dance/stage design to parents. We were asked to watch the video and make 'notes in action', then reflect upon the film afterwards and write 'notes on action'. We were asked to watch the film while considering one of two questions. I chose, 'What is the impact of an arts day on pupil motivation and/or

achievement?’ After the video, we were asked to get into groups of around three to discuss our notes. In my group (me, plus a man and woman) we agreed that since no children were interviewed in the video, it was difficult to assess their motivation/achievement. After talking in our groups we were invited to pool our responses; the general consensus was that the arts day looked ‘practitioner led’ rather than pupil led.

At the end of the session, our instructor gave us File 03, from ‘Learning to Enquire’ by CAPE. In conclusion, our instructor told us that an enquiry plan is not the same as a project plan, and asked, ‘How are you going to plan a project?’ After the session, I asked our instructor if the creative agents’ enquiries were going to form some kind of data bank. He replied that he did not know, because ‘all this is new’; that ‘things are changing’, and that ‘enquiry is desired’, but at the moment there is no website onto which the information can be uploaded.

Reflection

Creativity, Culture & Education (CCE)’s desire for creative agents to both implement and evaluate Creative Partnerships’ projects is symptomatic of the movement towards identifying “what works” in education, discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis. In adopting the “what works” protocol, Creative Partnerships is adopting the standards agenda and by default the inequality that it fosters, although this was not acknowledged during the training session. The training session encouraged creative agents to employ a “bullet-point” approach to the development of arts-based activities, and although the creative agents did not articulate the belief that questions such as, ‘What is the through line of this activity?’ compromised their artistic integrity, during the the discussion of the CP Nottingham project, the creative agents’ questions about the artistic merits of the arts’ day were deflected by the instructor, who urged the creative agents to think about arts-based activities purely in terms of measurable outcomes. It would appear, then, that creative agents are being instructed to steer teachers towards performativity via Creative Partnerships: given the teachers’ confusion over what constitutes resistance to the standards agenda, expressed at the previous training session, this task is unlikely to meet with opposition in schools.

First CP planning meeting with Church Road Secondary School

On Friday 6th March, I attended the first CP planning meeting with teachers from Church Road Secondary School (Head of Y8 [HY8], RE teacher, design teacher; drama teacher); CP creative practitioners (Ms X; CP drama lady; CP visual artist) and an architect. The meeting was held in the school, and its purpose was to further some initial discussions about how the Year 8 pupils might design an outdoor space around the theme of wellbeing. The meeting was not tape recorded: the following diary entry is the typed-up version of notes that I made during the meeting, and does not constitute a full record of that meeting.

Diary entry, 6th March 2009

The architect gave a PowerPoint presentation on design stages. He said that Church Road Secondary School will be rebuilt at some point under the Building Schools for the Future plan, 'so we can't justify £50k for something that may be bulldozed'. The children can design the outdoor space, but 'being realistic is key - the kids are contributing to the design but not building it'. He said that the children may come up with ideas that are completely impractical, but that the architects can 'translate those ideas into a practical reality'. The architect discussed 'the business need', and claimed that design emanates from this process. He advised the teachers to 'sell the idea to kids': if they're in Year 8 and designing this, 'they may not see it built, but when they are in the sixth form they may see it built'.

After the presentation, the architect left the meeting, and the group discussed whether they should offer a prize to motivate Year 8 pupils, 'because if they cannot create the outdoor space this term, and may have left the school before it is built, would a prize be an incentive?' The design teacher said, 'We have the software to produce computer models of the plans.' The whole group discussed 'the creation', asking if it should be a focal point; can it move, play music, etc, and wondered if elements of it could be created, 'even if the whole can't'. The CP drama lady put forward an idea that the teachers seemed to really

like: 'We could have different rooms in the school – one room full of cushions; bean bags; no other furniture. What does it feel like? Then go to another room, completely empty. What does it feel like?' Ms X said she has a seven metre marquee. The RE teacher said, 'We could explore spirituality.' Other people mentioned gardens; feng shui. Someone suggested it should be a flexible space. HY8 reminded the group that 'we must let the children design this' and 'not impose our ideas.' Ms X replied, 'If we give them the right things to explore, they will build flexibility in.' Everyone discussed how this could be done. The RE teacher said, 'We could consider how learning and wellbeing are linked together.' The design teacher asked, 'Do we *want* to link to learning?' The consensus was, 'Yes.' Everyone wondered if it could be 'an adaptable space'; someone said, 'We could use it in lesson time or as a quiet space'; someone else asked, 'does it need electrics?' The CP visual artist asked, 'What will happen if the children want to weave willow branches?' The design teacher replied, 'Can that be used for lessons? What about weather? Acoustics?' Ms X said, 'Church Road kids are more aware of their learning than other kids we have worked with. We can talk about safety, bullying. Does the space need to be visible, so bullying cannot take place?'

The discussion then moved on to the issue of whether or not the pupils should 'go on trips'. The creative practitioners suggested trips to Alnwick Gardens; Sage; Baltic; 'There could be a launch day and a trip day.' The drama teacher said Northern Stage is showing 'Happiness'. The consensus was that trips are expensive – 'We can't afford for all kids to go' and it is 'not fair if some can't go.' Someone suggested that we might ask the pupils to visit churches and so on as part of their homework.

Attention then turned to the discussion of the CP workshop. Someone asked, 'Will 240 children all experience the same? Or, will half explore space and half explore wellbeing?' Ms X asked if the teachers had brainstormed wellbeing already. HY8 said, 'Yes, [the design teacher] is going to send notes on a disk to CP.' Someone asked if there were going to be two separate days to explore the project thematically: space/learning? HY8 said, 'We must think about resources, staffing; carousel.' The teachers said there should be two launch days:

‘Logistically it is easier to do by half population...We can learn from the first day and revise for the second day.’ Someone pointed out that ‘We haven’t got enough staff to have groups smaller than 30 pupils.’ Ms X said, ‘We could have one member of staff per 30 pupils, but have two CP agents per 30: that’s 15 kids each.’ Someone said, ‘We must keep costs down’ and everyone discussed the issue of staffing, asking, ‘Do we need cover for days? Would the whole day be led by CP?’ Everyone agreed that would be too expensive: ‘Staff could do middle and end of day.’ HY8 said, ‘The Launch day needs wow factor’ and that ‘CP brings more wow factor.’ The design teacher mentioned a Nicole Kidman film, but he couldn’t remember its name; he said it features bare props. Ms X suggested, ‘We could act the same scene in different places. CP workshops; drama around place.’ The CP drama lady said that the children could use mime, e.g. going through a door. Someone else suggested that we should keep the focus on wellbeing, as well as space. Someone asked, ‘Can space move?’

HY8 said this meeting was a huge step forward, and said, ‘The school couldn’t do it on its own.’

Reflection

In July 2010, the newly elected coalition government announced its intention to abandon New Labour’s Building Schools for the Future programme, and this announcement arguably lends poignancy to Church Road Secondary School’s discussion of the development of an outdoor learning space for its pupils. Although only a figure of speech, the architect’s assertion that the teachers should ‘Sell the idea to the kids’ is an example of the kind of business terminology that has crept into education as a result of marketisation: under neoliberalism, teachers do not impart knowledge; they “sell” ideas.

Second CP planning meeting with Church Road Secondary School

On Thursday 12th March 2009, I attended the second CP/Church Road Secondary School planning meeting, held in a cricket pavilion. The meeting was comprised of Church Road staff (the head of Year 8 (HY8); the design teacher; the RE

teacher; the drama teacher) and CP employees (Ms X; the CP visual artist; the CP drama lady). Throughout the meeting, HY8 wrote a week-by-week plan on flipchart paper with a jumbo marker pen. The meeting was not tape recorded: the following diary entry is the typed-up version of notes that I made during what was a very long meeting. Although it would have been possible to produce a heavily edited version of the Church Road CP planning meeting, the use of “highlights” risks researcher bias, and goes against the spirit of enquiry put forward by Lincoln and Guba (1985), whereby the reader is “present” at the event. Arguably, it is necessary to be “present” at this meeting in order to fully appreciate the amount of energy that was directed into the planning of this CP project by the teachers and creative practitioners, and the extent of their failure to identify the rationale of the project.

Diary entry, 12th March 2009

Design teacher: We know more or less what the goal is...for kids to improve the environment and wellbeing....The philosophy will be done elsewhere....In design we'll tour the school – in design and art lessons, explore areas, outside – take photographs. Look at architecture; land art; Andrew Goldsworthy; Frank Lloyd Wright. Kids present ideas and maybe a basic model to show [the architect] in the hall. [The architect] can talk with kids about costs...I don't want to put barriers in the way at the start.

(The head of Year 8 (HY8) guided the process and wrote headings, 'Week one' through 'Week six' on the flipchart paper, as shown below.)

Week one *(written at top of flipchart paper)*

HY8: Okay, it's the launch: give a design brief.

Design teacher: Explore our environment.

HY8: Each lesson should have a driving question.

Design teacher: What do we notice about our environment?

HY8: Yes. What about art?

Drama teacher: Sculptures?

Design teacher: Land art.

HY8: Go out, what do we do? Tour; compiling; presenting.

Week two

HY8: We will have had the launch. What is our driving question? What do architects achieve? How do architects help the environment? What is the role of architects in impacting on the environment? Show kids clips from TV show 'Grand Designs'?

Design teacher: One lesson. Three computers per room – split kids – research on internet; books; Gaudi; Frank Lloyd Wright – have things on walls – a whole wall of examples.

HY8: How about, 'What can we find out about global architects?' 'How are global architects creative?' 'How creative can you be as an architect?' Visiting places as homework.

Design teacher: In week one?

RE teacher: Set it up before Easter.

HY8: We need to stop pretending that learning fits into compact terms. Terms are always different lengths – better to have set numbers of weeks.

Drama teacher: If you have holidays, kids go flat.

Design teacher: What is land art and how can it improve your environment?

Week three

HY8: Reflecting; analyzing. What, when, who, why? Review: what do we, as Year 7 and 8, want from Church Road Secondary School (CRSS)? What might improve things? Kids design questionnaire. What do people want at CRSS in terms of environment?' Canvassing opinion – use ICT, use Gateway, Mr A puts surveys on Gateway. CRSS environment website – as a Google document. That could be two lessons.

General talk: Could we have idea boxes around school? Drop notes in?

HY8: On launch day? Then open and use ideas in week three. Do this in art?

General talk: Tutor group questionnaire? Come up with questions, choose the best ones.

(We paused briefly to pass round some biscuits. By now the CP creative practitioners had arrived, and they asked if they could see the design teacher's PowerPoint on the kids' brainstorming of wellbeing.)

Ms X: We need to try to pin down 5 or 6 key features of wellbeing.

CP had come up with, and the design teacher agreed with, the following:

1. Safety, feel safe, secure.
2. Control, if you're led by someone you are not in control; stress.
3. Coping with change.
4. Physical comfort – light, sound etc.
5. Emotional, spiritual. Environmental, economic, balanced sense of self.

General talk: Wellbeing is a sense of belonging. Hellen Keller – blind, but turned this around. What can 'glass half full' kids share with 'glass half empty kids'?

CP visual artist: Terry Wogan on the radio... a Buddhist monk said 'you always have two choices – good or bad. See opportunity or see calamity'.

General talk: But is it more nature or nurture?

RE teacher: I think it's all nurture.

CP visual artist: Gardens of sand, churches – different spaces. Why do you go to those spaces?

(We then split back into two groups. The creative practitioners sat in a corner facing the view of the cricket ground and discussed their ideas, while the teachers' discussion was resumed.)

Week four

Design teacher: What will our land art look like? Then it's half term.

(HY8 and the RE teacher consulted a large diary to check on dates, Enrichment days, holidays etc.)

Week five

HY8: Week commencing 1st June 2009. Friday 5th June, kids present ideas in hall. What worked well? Reflections. Someone comes in, view each other's ideas, get feedback.

Week six

HY8: Commences 8th June, begin to *make* stuff...Should all Year 8s be there to evaluate? Or, should Year 7s comment? But they haven't been involved in the process.

General talk: Can't leave stuff in hall over weekend – hall will be booked. Put it out in design rooms – look at it there?

HY8: Pushing my luck to pull Year 7s and Year 8s...Each tutor group could pick the best design – best from each tutor group goes in hall. [The architect] judges - £100 prize for tutor group that wins.

General talk: How to make this fair – each child has one vote – teacher has 30 votes – has casting vote?

RE teacher: One tutor group could have two cracking designs – one tutor group could have a mediocre design that goes through.

HY8: Show me a way around that.

General talk: One from each tutor group, plus another one. Two hours, Thursday afternoon. How long for each presentation? Five minutes? 236 kids – 60 presentations? Best ones presented to [the architect].

HY8: So, present in class, lesson two. In class we come up with one plus 'worthies'. Week commencing 29th June – Thursday afternoon, four and five present best and judged by [the architect], £100 prize. Now the design medium term plan is done, let's see how drama and RE and so on fit in.

RE teacher: Self analysis through a strand. There could be a problem if their own wellbeing is shite. What can we do about that? Opportunities for wellbeing are limited – for 235 students it will work, for the other, it hits a nerve.

HY8: We could say, 'If at any point you are feeling unsettled or uncomfortable, go and see Mrs S' – that would cover our backs. I could say that on launch day. It has to be about them and how they can make progress. It might raise something they have tried to repress. Can't ignore it now because they have been made to think about it.

Drama teacher: They have one lesson of drama, one lesson of music per week.

HY8: What is the effect of space on emotions in performance?

Drama teacher: How drama helps you feel good. Why do you go to the theatre – to be involved? Why do you choose to be in a performance? Learn to manage emotions associated with performance.

RE teacher: Link it to their real lives?

Drama teacher: Emotion memory – how you create a believable performance. Help their transition to Year 9.

Design teacher: How many of the kids have been to the theatre?

HY8: Every Year 7 went to the panto. Put theatre trips into suggested Easter homework. *[To the design teacher]* We're not dealing with feeling, emotions in art and design – play devil's advocate – they can fall back on what they have already done in other lessons. As long as they're sharing in groups about feelings they can feed back into us (design).

RE teacher: Asia; Buddhism; Yoga; China; Tai Chi.

HY8: Some schools, a primary in Gateshead, gets kids to do massage!

(Everyone laughed.)

RE teacher: Eastern culture; relaxed; promotes wellbeing.

HY8: '100 Religions of the World' – can we take them on an imaginary journey through Buddhism – find imaginary places – put pictures up of 'where we are'? 'Wellbeing Tourism'.

(General talk about spas.)

HY8: Ideas first; then lessons.

Drama teacher: Performance about feelings; nerves; about happy endings. Why? How do you feel? Plan out speeches, rehearse speaking to an audience.

Design teacher: How do you feel as part of an audience if the speaker turns their back?

General talk: Music; they have already looked at mood music.

Week one

Drama teacher: Wellbeing, Mozart and Beatles – promote concentration. Different to mood.

Week two

Drama teacher: Spaces, different music for different situations. Sydney Opera House; Sage, why are they designed like this?

Week three

Design teacher: Podium software – computerised – sound effects – different instruments.

Week four, Bass *(not sure what that is – read this over drama teacher's shoulder as she wrote it on an A4 sheet of paper that was divided into weeks.)*

Half term

Week five

Drama teacher: Create a piece of music to go with design – wellbeing.

Week six

Drama teacher: Music performance: concentration; focus.

Drama teacher: Singing and its affect on wellbeing.

(HY8 then began to talk to the RE teacher.)

RE teacher: Is a cathedral distracting? Quakers meet in ordinary rooms – if the spirit moves you, you speak, if it doesn't you just go home. History of religion? Faith; buildings.

(We then had a tea break. The drama teacher said she was feeling tired, and 'not on top form'. The RE teacher said she wasn't 'getting into it yet'. After the tea break we came together as a whole group.)

Ms X: The key areas are space – physical; temporal; how you push boundaries. We have designed a day that explores wellbeing/space. 6 workshops; 3 groups of 40. Split into groups of 20 in their areas. One member of staff per 30, therefore one staff member free to lend a hand where needed. Whole group in the morning in the hall. Ten minute warm-up using CP drama lady's ideas of distraction cards. Split into two halves – one half given task cards (e.g. count to 20) – focus on the exercise. Other half has distraction cards (e.g. stamp your feet) – task group must try to carry on in spite of distraction. Day split into three areas. 45 minutes in each of six areas. Two activities per zone. First one is 'Pod Hideaway' – in hall plus stage area. Stage is a black box space. We will use our own lights, mirror balls, smoke machine, and fabrics. I will need to check if we can use smoke machine, health and safety.

HY8: They will have done nothing on wellbeing prior to this day.

General talk: Put up board and 'whack on' ideas during the day.

(The CP visual artist showed everyone a model made from sticks, string and gummed paper.)

CP visual artist: This is the Pod Hideaway. I will build an 8' x 8' cube - timber frame - erect it in school prior to school starting. Entrance to frame – given string, fill in space any way they feel – space inside that can't be filled so that they can sit in it. Kids are designers. They will start seeing random patterns emerge. Block in sections – papier-mâché technique as day progresses. Do we want to paint a panel? Idea is 'working outside the box'. No set way of thinking. Letting go – double edge – things you want, things you have to let go of. First group will see that their ideas have been altered by others. Mobile space – cube can be rotated.

General talk: Projects are hands-on apart from on stage. 20 on stage; 20 on Pod. Or more fluid?

CP visual artist: Do we have facilities for time-lapse photography? Web cam?

HY8: School will look into this. Dinner would have to be worked around Pod. Will Pod Hideaway be lifted onto the stage at end of the launch day?

CP visual artist: It will be dismantled and recycled.

Ms X: You could budget for [the visual artist] to come back in to dismantle it, or do you want to leave it? But it won't go through door. It will be made of 2 x 2 timbers – not lightweight.

HY8: I'll discuss with [the deputy head] what to do with the installation.

Design teacher: We have drum club on stage – could do drums inside it.

CP visual artist: The entrance is only 2' wide – you have to crawl in.

Ms X: Do you have special needs kids?

RE teacher and HY8: Cerebral palsy; dwarfism.

Ms X: Dwarfism? We've worked with her before.

HY8: Two kids. No wheelchairs.

CP visual artist: There is latex in the glue. Is anyone latex intolerant?

HY8: There is a boy with autism – he's a long way along the spectrum, we will ensure there is support.

CP visual artist: You can make mini models of the Pod Hideaway in class.

Ms X: This first area is playing with space. The second area is the sensory trail.

CP drama lady: Preferably outside, weather permitting. One group blind; other group leaders. Leaders create environment. Meditation – sit on grass, listen to poem, and remember information, the line of a poem, while you do obstacles. Taste things? Nut allergies? No nuts. Repeat task in another environment. In control/not in control. Try in both. Inside/outside. Like ghost train – repeated for each person that goes past that area – e.g. spray water. Get all senses working. Chairs and tables – part of trail. Safely led through a positive and negative environment. Safety; control; change. Two classrooms – side by side is more practical than outside – open window, feel breeze.

Ms X: The third area is sculptures; installation. Challenge outdoors – led by me. Umbrellas, poles, roles – go into space. Create something – moving piece, sculpture, performance – singing? Try to bring all elements together. Quick – don't think too much, just do it. Photograph it. Take same props into different space – repeat but in different way.

CP drama lady: Taking things into space, e.g. school books become butterflies.

Ms X: 45 minutes, swap, go into performance workshop with [CP drama lady]. Adapt to changing spaces, build a safe structure. Given some performance task – all perform the same piece – adapt performance to fit perfectly into space.

CP drama lady: Ask the kids, what were their distractions, challenges? E.g. under a table, in a square marked on the ground. Must be *in* space. Wellbeing – I am too close to another person; it's too dark. Frustration, e.g. it's too small. Lead to discussion at end – what challenged you?

Ms X: Understanding, nothing specific, of space/wellbeing.

HY8: That's exactly what we need.

General talk: Kids could write feedback – put on Pod Hideaway– Post-Its, pegs – could stick Post-Its to latex – collect them afterwards.

Ms X: We have not factored in the end product – we have focused on themes, not the end product.

HY8: We could address this in assembly, and not take time out of launch day. I could say 'Tomorrow is a launch day...' Don't want preconceived ideas. Say, 'Hands-on day about exploring different places'.

Ms X: Uniform?

HY8: No uniform.

Ms X: Can be a problem – no uniform, feeling that we're on holiday; discipline; P.E. teacher stepped in once and sorted discipline.

CP visual artist: If they come in best clothes, they don't want to get dirty. Glue can stain. Quick drying paints are not washable.

HY8: We'll send a letter home saying come in old stuff: stains are likely.

CP visual artist: Latex dries clear, turns black when you wash clothes – it mixes with detergent.

HY8: Teachers must remain in charge of discipline – have dialogue between artists and staff. Staff say, 'Would you like me to step in now?' Written code of conduct. I will send you a copy of the Church Road Secondary School Code.

Design teacher: Agree a trigger word – teacher stands at back and hears it, and knows to step in.

HY8: Marshmallows.

Ms X: Staff act as mentor; participant? Find a happy medium. You have knowledge of individuals – this is them working well.

HY8: Easiest model is the staff who are normally there for that hour.

Ms X: We have budgeted for a member of staff per area. £4,000.

CP visual artist: Screws, hook, 15m string – sits comfortably within what [the deputy head] said. She said don't spend it all on launch – middle and end too.

HY8: We will split sessions: day one, ABCD tutor groups. Day two, EFGH tutor groups.

General talk: ABCD are always more trouble. Why is this? Same every year, even though they mix up the intake.

Ms X: We need access, 7 am to 7.30 am to set up.

HY8: We have a new caretaker; you could come at 7.30, or come in the night before. Monday p.m. – set up lights etc. After 3.30. Do you want tarpaulin on floor?

CP visual artist: We must protect the floor from F1 glue.

General talk: Is tarpaulin a trip hazard? Tape – won't hold with masking tape. Gaffer tape leaves more mess than the glue. Girls must tie hair back - glue sticks to hair.

Ms X: Regarding the prize, how will you decide who is the best?

HY8: The architects will decide; what is practical.

Ms X: Is it the best design or most practical?

CP visual artist: 'What I want; what I need; what I can do.'

HY8: We'll start off wild, and then rein it in.

RE teacher: I have a lot of time to fill. 18 lessons here, 18 lessons there.

CP drama lady: There is a Buddhist artist Loori – look at art in a different way.

Ms X: Shape; symbol. How do they make you feel anxious – why? We spend a lot of our lives in boxes – other cultures don't. Africans – don't have separate word for song/dance – do both together. Trips? Cathedral?

HY8: Enrichment in the last two weeks – trips. Maths, science etc. won't be happy with lots of trips.

General talk: Cathedral; design; acoustics; history; spirituality; geography. Performance – people watching something. Could we do virtual tour? Google?

HY8: We could get a DVD from the cathedral.

CP visual artist: Virtual tour of Stonehenge?

General talk: That sounds good. 'Spirituality Tour.'

CP visual artist: Termite towers; caterpillar chrysalis; beehives – why are structures like that? Optimum use of space – spiders' webs.

Design teacher: I really like this' [*points to the visual artist's cube*]. But – will they think they have to build a cube?

Ms X: He [the visual artist] could make mini-models – at end of day he could show them that bits could be cut away and used to make abstract random shapes.

HY8: It's a theoretical concept. [*To the visual artist*] What would you make it of? Glass, Perspex, pop-up canopy?

Ms X: Solar power? You may get a grant for that.

(We broke up for lunch, after which the CP workers left and the teachers' meeting resumed. There was a marked change in attitude in the afternoon – the teachers seemed less focused. The conversation drifted.)

HY8: What to do? Where can the kids go to experience different types of places? The castle? Market? Park?

(A member of the pavilion staff came into the room and asked if we needed anything. The design teacher suggested internet access and he brought us each a lap top. The teachers began to Google places to visit in the local area. They said they are not from this area, so don't know what is available.)

General talk: Cathedral; local church of choice; Alnwick Garden Tree House; Baltic and Sage; Metro Centre – 'it's the church of the 21st century'. Tell them to go to Metro Centre and stand outside House of Fraser – performance space – watch a performance; sit in a coffee shop – watch the world go by. Go to the coast; wooded area; empty field; Angel of the North; a concert; the theatre, a football match. 'The vaguer we are the better'.

RE teacher: Keep a diary – last four lessons, reviewing what wellbeing is. Could be physical – yoga, aerobics.

HY8: We don't want to lapse into citizenship.

RE teacher: Wellbeing as a village? Allotments, etc. What makes them feel most well in their own environment?

General talk: Regeneration; Discovery Centre – 'that's free to get in'. How do the seasons affect our wellbeing? Get into groups – swap, analyse seasons.

HY8: Threats of autumn?

RE teacher: What? Why autumn? Killer leaves... Dancing; physical wellbeing; spirituality tourism.

HY8: Don't you mean 'spirituality tour'? What's that religion that does tai chi, or feng shui? We could do regions, continents. Martin Luther King, no, Martin Luther – condemned papal indulgences.

RE teacher: What are they?

HY8: You could pay to have prayers said for you when you died to free your soul from purgatory.

Design teacher: Haven't heard of that before.

HY8: Witchcraft – no, not witchcraft. Religious gurus – Ama in India – she is like a living saint.

(At this point things just fell apart – everyone was tired. The RE teacher showed us her wedding dress on the laptop and her wedding venue; we Googled the resort in Malaga that she is going to for her hen night.)

Reflection

This meeting confounded my expectations for CP, in that there was little evidence of the kind of research planning recommended at the CP training sessions that I had attended previously: for example, no one asked how the impact of the project might be measured. However, this meeting did not convey a sense that the teachers and creative practitioners were consciously striving to resist post-88 performativity. Instead, the teachers seemed to be attempting to convert the construct of wellbeing into an educational experience through arts-based activities, for reasons that were not made clear. Notwithstanding the precision of the timetabling of educational experiences, there was evidently a sense of confusion over the purpose and value of this project, and important questions raised by the teachers and creative agents over the nature of wellbeing and the arts were left unanswered. Arguably, the planning of this particular project, and in particular the manner in which the teachers and creative agents sidestepped the definition of wellbeing, mirrors the planning of Creative Partnerships itself, which was based on the NACCCE's account of creativity, and was launched in 2002 regardless of the confusion surrounding that particular construct.

Observation of CP project launch day number one

On Tuesday 28th April 2009 I went to Church Road Secondary School to observe the first of two CP Launch days.

Diary entry, 28th April 2009

I arrived around **8.20 am**. On my way in I met the CP drama lady and her sisters (CPA and CPB) who had been paid to work on the project. We went into the school hall, where the CP visual artist was setting up the Pod Hideaway: a huge, pine, square-shaped frame on a blue tarpaulin. Ms X was also there, and she gave the CP workers matching T shirts to wear. HY8 joined us in the school hall. Ms X said that she had come in the day before to set up a 'wellbeing space' on the stage. The stage curtains were closed, and I went inside for a look: there was a smoke machine, twinkling fairy lights and ambient music, exercise mats and

cushions on the floor. I climbed down from the stage and looked along the two tables that the CP visual artist had set up in front of the Pod Hideaway. They were covered with laminated A4 sheets of photos and captions about nature: how bees make hives; termites make mounds; snails make shells etc., as well as photos of human mud huts that resembled termite mounds.

At 9 am the Year 8 pupils doing the launch that day assembled in the hall, dressed in non-uniform. HY8 addressed the pupils, briefly going through some of the logistics of the day, reminding the pupils that if they were confused, a timetable was posted on their tutor room door. Ms X announced that the day would cover four areas: senses (CPA and CPB); drama (CP drama lady); art (CP visual artist); living sculptures (Ms X).

The CP drama lady then began a warm-up activity. She split the pupils into two groups: one half of the room was 'distracters,' the other half was 'tasks'. The pupils were told to form groups of three to four. The sisters went round the groups, giving them cards on which either a 'task' or a 'distraction' was written. The distracters were told to go around the room; the task groups were told to stay put. I could see a group of three 'task' boys near me appearing to play charades. Some 'distracters' came over and started barking in their faces. It was very noisy. The CP drama lady shouted above the din, telling the distracters to move on to another group.

The activity ended at 9.15. The pupils seemed to have enjoyed it – they were smiling and laughing. I was free to observe where I pleased, so I chose to watch the CP visual artist's Pod Hideaway activity during the first session, from **9.15 – 10 am**. The CP visual artist told the pupils, 'We are using nature as our theme for wellbeing.' He had them look at the A4 laminated photos, then gave the pupils screws with hook-type ends and told them to look for holes in the 8 x 8 wooden frame and to screw the hooks into the pre-drilled holes. Then the artist gave the pupils balls of pink, blue and yellow yarn and told them to wrap the yarn round the cube, securing it to the hooks. Some boys asked the artist for permission to climb the ladder to reach the top of the frame – he said yes. Another boy threw a ball of yarn over the top of the frame – once the pupils had

seen him do this, they all copied and laughed a lot as they threw the yarn balls to one another, creating a sort of spider's web on the cube.

I introduced myself to Mrs V, the learning support lady. She was keeping her eye on the ladder. The artist intervened when he saw lots of droopy string. He said, 'They need to be tight' and 'we need to work out where the loose ones are.' The pupils began pulling on the threads to tighten them. Two boys were fooling around outside the cube. The artist ignored them, but intervened to stop some girls from blocking the entrance to the cube (a hoola hoop) with string; he told them to connect the string to existing string and make it tighter. The artist wanted the hoola hoop opening to remain clear so that the pupils could crawl inside the cube. He said, 'No more throwing.' Pupils pulled cameras out of their pockets and started to take photos. Some boys stopped working on the cube and began looking at the A4 laminated sheets on the table.

At 10 am the groups swapped. I watched Ms X's 'living sculptures' during the second session (**10 am – 10.45 am**). Ms X asked the pupils to arrange their chairs in a semi- circle, and then asked them what they had done in their previous session. A boy said they had been acting out nursery rhymes. Ms X said, 'So you were creating your own space. Instead of creating space, we're going to be creating pictures.'

Ms X split the children into four groups, and told them to make 'a picture that looks like a box, using anything that is normally in this room.' The children used tables and chairs, plus their arms, to form cubes. Everyone was told to sit down again in the chairs in a semi-circle. Ms X went round the group asking each child to name a job – they struggled with this. Then she split the pupils into pairs and told them to mime different jobs. For example, one girl sat on a chair in front of another girl, who mimed brushing her hair to represent a hairdresser; another girl posed while her friend pretended to draw her to represent an artist. Ms X had the pupils guess what each pair was miming. Again, they struggled with this.

Next, Ms X told the pupils to use the props that she had brought with her, but not in a normal way. To explain what she meant, Ms X took a hat, and showed the pupils that it could be used as a bowl. Then she took a washing up bowl and showed that it could be used as a hat. Ms X put the pupils into groups

of five, and told them to represent a form of transport – ‘create a scene that shows this using actions and sounds.’ Ms X asked the pupils to guess one another’s sculptures, and they found this very difficult. I could see that one group was representing a helicopter (a girl was twirling an umbrella over her head), but the pupils were not able to figure this out. Ms X helped the pupils to guess what mode of transport each group was representing, and the groups said ‘yes’ when it had been correctly identified.

Ms X then divided the group into three and told the groups to create a place using props. The design teacher (who had attended the planning meeting) was the teacher in charge, and Ms X asked him to sort out a group of boys who were ‘fixated on props’. They were pretending that the cardboard tubes were rocket launchers and that the mops were guns. The pupils produced their scenes – the only one that I could figure out was the restaurant devised by the girls. The two other groups (all boys) had done a restaurant and a kitchen, but nothing made sense – in both cases they had a jumble of props and actions that had nothing to do with anything.

Finally, Ms X told the pupils to form one group and create a scene. The girls were the most dedicated – they decided to create a park, using blue cloth as water and clothes pegs as fish. One girl was a statue in the park, while two others pretended to be ‘drunk on a bench’. The boys were fooling on. Two boys in particular were being silly with ‘guns’. Ms X had to ask the design teacher to intervene. Ms X told the pupils to, ‘Hold the scene and freeze.’ The boys had formed a cross out of two cardboard tubes and another boy lay on the ground in front of the cross – they told Ms X it was a graveyard in the park.

At 10.45 the groups swapped. I joined HY8 on the stage for the next session (10.45 – 11.15) in the wellbeing space. As I approached the stage, the previous group of pupils was leaving, and a boy shouted down to his friend who had joined the CP creative artist at the Pod, ‘That one’s minting’ and gestured towards the stage. We entered the stage by parting the curtains: it was dark and twinkled with coloured fairy lights; we could hear the sound of water bubbling, followed by pan-pipes, coming from the CD player. HY8 asked everyone to lie down on the cushions and blankets and said, ‘Silence, I want silence.’ There was

a bit of giggling and competition over the blankets. HY8 said, 'Boys, it would be a great shame if I had to separate you.' I sat on the floorboards to the edge of the group. After a while, HY8 told the boys to come and sit to the side of the stage, and leave the girls on the blankets. After a few minutes, she told the boys and girls to swap places. She asked them, 'What is wellbeing? After break, think about how you felt here.' A couple of boys were still fooling around, and HY8 took them to one side and said, 'What is the problem?' They shrugged their shoulders. The children were asked to write their definition of wellbeing on fluorescent, star-shaped Post-It notes and attach them to a white folding screen, surrounded by fairy lights, at the back of the stage. These were collected at the end of the session and given to the RE teacher who had attended the planning meeting.

From 11.15 am – 11. 35 it was break time. The CP visual artist used hazard tape strung between two chairs to form a barrier in front of the Pod Hideaway. It was a 'wet break' so everyone was in the hall.

From 11.35 – 12.35 I observed the 'sensory trail' in Room 9 with CPA. Pupils were sitting on the desks, chatting to one another: every few minutes a child in a blindfold came into the room, guided by a friend. As the blindfolded child approached each table, pupils made him/her sniff pickle juice and body lotion; taste carrots and sweeties; touch jelly; be tickled with a feather; have rattles, booing etc. going on around their head, and listen while CPA recited a poem. The session got progressively louder and more chaotic. A boy tried to do the trail twice, and was stopped by the girls. A blindfolded girl refused to taste anything, and CPA had to remove the jelly and caution that the hand wipes would be removed if they were thrown. A box of blindfolds appeared, and the children in Room 9 began to go, one by one, on a sensory trail of Room 10.

As the children returned to Room 9, in dribs and drabs, CPA asked for feedback:

- I loved it.
- It felt strange – you knew you were in the classroom but didn't know what else.

CPA asked them if they could remember what her sister CPB had read to them on the sensory trail in Room 10.

- She didn't read it so I thought it was a bit rubbish.
- I heard the word 'bed'.
- I could only remember four words.
- Glass; shoe; sausage; stomach.
- Monkey.
- Bed.
- Orange. Kiwi.
- Was Congo one?
- Kangaroo.

CPA said, 'What about the noise. Was it distracting?' They made various agreements, disagreements. By now, all of CPA's pupils were back in Room 9. CPA told the pupils to sit in groups at the tables, and she handed each group a large sheet of sugar paper and some pens. CPA asked them to write down the words they remembered. CPA said, 'It's about distractions, solutions.' CPA asked them to write down how they felt. Two girls wrote: 'Scared; Confused; Dizzy; Worried; Uncomfortable'. Three boys wrote: 'Cool; Mint; Wicked'. A group of boys and girls wrote: 'Vulnerable; Scared; Glass; Shoe; Kiwi'. CPA asked for the 'order of experience': they said it was sound first, followed by smell, feel, and then taste. There was some disagreement: CPA said maybe it was a different order for everyone. A girl complained that, 'They were forcing us to do it; pushing our heads down.'

From 12.35 to 1.30 we had lunch. After lunch I joined the CP drama lady's drama session from **1.30 pm – 2.15**. The session was held in a long narrow room, with red and yellow plastic chairs and some grey tables stacked to the sides. The CP drama lady told the group that they had to make a little room, 'Like when you were little – building a den.' They were told to, 'Perform in, on or under your structure.' The CP drama lady said, 'Think about what kind of space you would like – I'm not sure if it's this site or the other site.' (I assume that she was referring to the eventual goal of this exercise: to build an outdoor learning space.)

The pupils had to choose a nursery rhyme and perform it. The CP drama lady told the group that earlier today some children had done an excellent performance of Incy Wincy Spider: they had stacked chairs and tables up against the wall below the window sill and climbed up and down them, and had wafted blue fabric to represent the rain. The children split into four groups: one group did Baa Baa Black Sheep; one group did Little Miss Muffet; two groups did Humpty Dumpty. At no point could I see how they chose a nursery rhyme: they moved very quickly from naming a rhyme to working out how to stage it with props, and no group got into a squabble over what to perform. The group of boys that did Humpty Dumpty arranged two parallel rows of chairs which they draped with blue cloth to form the 'wall'. They had a good time running around their structure and fooling on. The two girls that did Humpty Dumpty (as a separate group) didn't smile at all and were very dour: they put a chair on a table to form the wall and sat there until it was time to perform to the class. The group nearest to me performed Baa Baa Black Sheep: they changed the words from 'my dame' to 'my dames' so that three girls could sing that part. They used an upturned table with hazard tape wrapped around the legs as a sheep pen and one boy crouched inside as the sheep. A boy sang the opening line; then the sheep and the dames sang their lines, and the same boy doubled up as the 'little boy who lives down the lane': he sang that falsetto and skipped along which made everyone in the class laugh. The group that did Little Miss Muffet appeared to be inspired by the CP drama lady's mention of the Incy Wincy Spider performance: they built a similar structure beneath the same window. Each group performed their rhyme to the whole class. Baa Baa Black Sheep went first and they sang theirs. The boys doing Humpty Dumpty didn't sing, and the girls that followed them said 'Miss, do you have to sing?' and when she said 'no' they spoke their version of Humpty Dumpty. The Miss Muffet group also spoke their rhyme.

The CP drama lady said their performances were good. She asked the pupils what they would want the wellbeing space to be. They said: ice rink; sauna; sensory pod; cinema; vending machine; gym; place with comfy chairs.

At 2.15 the groups swapped for the last time that day. I went into Room 10 where CPB was holding her sensory trail. This group seemed much calmer

than the sensory trail group I had observed earlier. CPB spent some time discussing health and safety issues, for example telling the pupils to steer blindfolded pupils carefully 'so that they don't get injured', and asking if anyone had food allergies. At 2.30 both groups came together in Room 10. CPA's group was asked what words they could remember; they said 'nut'; 'dustbin'. They were asked what it felt like to be blindfolded and guided: 'Horrible; Lost; Scared; Blind'.

CPA asked, 'Did the food taste different blind?'

- It was disgusting what I tasted. I don't know what it was.
- It was pickled onion – you spat it out at us.

At 3.00 pm everyone went to the hall. HY8 said 'A, B, Cs' sit in groups' (the tutor groups had been split). HY8 told the pupils they could view the installation. By now, the Pod Hideaway was partially filled in with papier-mâché that was painted blue, red and yellow. The pupils filed past the front of the Pod Hideaway, up the steps onto the stage (so that they could view the Pod Hideaway from above) and then back down into the hall. They were told to sit in groups of four and were given evaluation sheets. The first sheet was headed 'Evaluation Question 1 – What went well?' I wandered around, peering at pupils' responses:

- The cube.
- Giant cube.
- Team work.
- We had fun.
- Room with blindfold.

The second sheet was headed 'Evaluation Question 2 – The day would have been even better if...' I read a response:

- If the glue didn't smell really bad and didn't stain our clothes.

The third sheet was headed 'Evaluation Question 3 – How could the space at Church Road Secondary School be improved?' I didn't manage to see the responses to this.

HY8 asked the pupils to give the artists a round of applause to thank them for the day.

At 3.30 the bell rang and the pupils went home. The deputy head joined HY8 in the hall, and she suggested that we have a debriefing on the stage. Everyone said that the day had gone well. Ms X said that the wellbeing space on the stage is something that the school could do: buy fairy lights; cushions and ‘chill-out CDs’. HY8 said it’s a nice idea, but the stage is used for the drum club, and the deputy head said she didn’t think it would be used much as a wellbeing space because the teachers are too busy. The CP visual artist said he’d had ‘no problems’, apart from the clothing issue: HY8 said the pupils had been told to wear old clothes, but they hadn’t. The visual artist replied that old clothes aren’t the same as clothes you don’t mind ruining. The CP visual artist said the Pod Hideaway would work better if one group did it all from start to finish. Ms X said that tomorrow she would avoid ‘war props’; she said that ‘The boys were obsessed with killing.’ HY8 said, ‘You’ve had the good kids today – you have the bad kids tomorrow.’ HY8 said that yesterday (Monday) one boy was excluded: a ‘key player has gone’ and ‘won’t be here tomorrow’... ‘He is naughty and makes the other children naughty.’ **At 4.15** I went home.

Reflection

I was particularly stuck by disclosure of the fact that a ‘naughty’ boy who ‘makes the other children naughty’ had been excluded prior to this CP project. Although this decision no doubt served the interests of both the creative agents and the rest of the pupils, it nevertheless makes a mockery of Tessa Jowell’s (2002) suggestion that Creative Partnerships might be used as a means to re-engage disaffected young people: the type of child that would, under Jowell’s account, stand to benefit most from the “civilising” influence of CP was excluded because of his disruptive behaviour. Further reflections on today’s activities are recorded under the Reflections on the second CP launch day.

LAUNCH DAY TWO: Wednesday 29th April 2009

Diary entry, 29th April 2009

I arrived at the school around **8.30 am**. I met the CP drama lady and her sisters, CPA and CPB, in the hall. They were saying how tired they were last night: they had fallen asleep as soon as they got home. We agreed that things had gone well yesterday, and we wondered how it would go today with the 'naughty children' that HY8 had warned us about.

I sat in front of the Pod Hideaway. The CP visual artist was busy setting things up for Pod number two, which stood to the right of yesterday's completed Pod.

At 9 am the pupils assembled in the hall. This time, I decided to follow one group for the entire day, to gain a sense of the flow of events from the pupils' perspective. HY8 addressed the pupils, as before, and then the drama lady ran the distracters/task activity, as before.

At 9.15 I followed 'my group' to Room 9. CPA explained the sensory trail to my group and then had them join the other group of pupils in Room 10 for safety instructions. The sensory trail was different today: the sisters said that last night they had decided to revise it. My group went in pairs (blindfolded) into Room 9.

At 9.50 my group was told to set up their sensory trail in Room 10. Almost everyone volunteered to do this. CPB organised them, and said that the food tasting was the most important job, and that she needed the most sensible children to do this: one boy seemed quite upset that she wouldn't let him do it, and he sulked for the rest of the session. CPB gave the pupils in charge of 'taste' paper plates with chopped raw carrot, sweeties, pickled onions and sliced banana. Other pupils volunteered to be in charge of 'sound', and got themselves into position by the door, and practised banging their hands on a table and jangling a metal belt. Some other pupils were put in charge of 'touch', and were given the paper plate of jelly and a feather. The pupils in charge of 'smell' had a paper plate of body lotion and a paper cup of pickle juice.

The other group of pupils began to enter the room wearing blindfolds. My group acted as their guides. Everything descended into confusion: pupils bumping into chairs; wandering around randomly; everyone talking loudly; CPB trying to read a list of words to the children while they sniffed body lotion etc. CPB called a halt to the activity, and had the pupils sit in groups at tables. CPB gave them large sheets of sugar paper and a pile of pens. CPB asked them what they felt during the sensory trail:

- It created an atmosphere.
- It was funny but it was scary.

CPB then asked, 'What was different between doing it and creating it?' This question did not produce a clear response: the pupils began to talk to each other without answering the question. CPB then asked, 'What kind of distractions are there in the classroom?'

- Noises.
- Pens.
- Pens being thrown.
- People outside the window.

At 10.35 the other group of pupils joined my group in the classroom. CPA asked the pupils to write a list of distractions in the classroom and then turn it into a short scene to act in front of everyone. The pupils got out of their seats, started shouting, tearing up bits of the sugar paper. CPB said, 'Is everybody ready to show back?' The pupils were encouraged to become quiet by CPA, CPB and the two teachers in the room. The first group performed their piece: two girls pretended to be writing, while another girl threw paper at their heads. The pupils that were pretending to write said, 'Stop it' and, 'Take no notice'. In the second group, a boy went out of the classroom, and came in noisily to disturb a lesson. In the third group, a boy pretended to be a father. He mimed answering his front door to some children, and said, 'You can come in, but you mustn't disturb them because they're doing their homework.' They came in and distracted the boy and girl from their homework, saying, 'Come to the park.'

At 10.45 my group went outside. Ms X was already outside, with props for her 'living sculptures' session. Although we were outside, we didn't discuss

the location of the outdoor learning space: instead we were confined to a tarmac area close to the school building, and Ms X told the pupils not to go on the grass. Ms X sent the children into the hall to bring out more props, and she expressed her surprise and concern to me again that the pupils were pretending that the props were weapons. The children devised a battle scene and acted out a war: they split into two groups and threw 'bombs' and play-fought one another with mop handles.

11.15 – 11.35 was break time. **At 11.35** I followed my group into the drama room for the CP drama lady's session. She told the pupils they would be building dens, 'Like when you were little.' A boy said 'Brill.' The pupils seemed really pleased. The CP drama lady told them the story of the Incy Wincy Spider success. One group of girls did Ring a Ring of Roses and used the blue cloth and bits of paper to be the 'fishes in the deep blue sea'. The CP drama lady asked the pupils why they had done the exercise: they did not respond, so she told them it was to 'conflict with space' and 'see how well you can adapt with space.'

At 12.35 we stopped for lunch. CPA and CPB said, 'The pupils today have been even better than the ones yesterday.' The CP drama lady said that perhaps they were acting differently towards these pupils because HY8 had warned them that they are naughty. I said that I could not see any difference between the pupils yesterday and today.

At 1.30 my group joined the CP visual artist to work on the Pod Hideaway. Some of the girls were wearing unsuitable clothes and refused to take part in case they damaged their clothing, so they sat on the steps to the side of the hall and watched. The artist showed the pupils how to coat sheets of special Japanese lantern paper with the glue, and then told them to attach the paper to the string wrapped around the Pod Hideaway to create shapes. Some of the pupils complained about the smell of the glue, while some boys were fascinated by it, rolling it over the table and their hands to create rubbery strands. Some pupils asked the artist why it 'smelt weird', and he said that it contained ammonia, the same as urine. They made noises of disgust, but kept on working on the Pod. Some girls painted the glued paper with red, yellow and blue paint, harlequin style. The artist talked to the pupils while they worked, about things

like insect habitats, and the whole activity felt calm and focussed. One girl got upset when her friend told her that the latex glue was made out of the same thing as condoms, and she refused to continue working on the Pod, and went to sit on the steps by the stage with the girls in the unsuitable clothes. I noticed that the pupils were blocking in one side of the cube with paper (the side nearest the table on which they were coating the paper with glue), rather than creating the random, organic shapes that the visual artist had hoped for. The same thing had happened yesterday, and I said to the artist that I thought it was because they didn't want to carry the gummy paper very far, and were sticking it in the easiest, rather than most interesting, place.

At 2.15 my group went up the steps to the stage and entered HY8's wellbeing space. HY8 told the children to lie on the blankets and cushions: this group did not giggle and fool on like yesterday's group. HY8 told the boys to get up and sit by the edge of the stage, then swap places with the girls. Then HY8 asked the boys and girls to all lie down together again. She asked them, 'Was it better to have more space?'

- Lovely.

HY8 then asked, 'If I asked you to be in here on your own how would you feel?'

- Bored.
- I wouldn't feel safe – someone coming in here I didn't know.

HY8 asked, 'What else did you notice?'

- Lights.

HY8 asked, 'Did the lights distract or absorb you?'

- Absorb.
- Relaxing.

HY8 said, 'They are low; dim.' Then she asked them about the music, the different instruments, and said that sound, as well as light, has a purpose. One boy said he found the music distracting. HY8 asked what they thought of the smoke machine.

- Good.

HY8 said they could also think about smells, lavender, roses, vanilla – ‘Different smells affect you in different ways.’ HY8 asked, ‘What is wellbeing?’

- Health.
- Where you live.
- Whole lifestyle.
- Finding the real you.

HY8 asked, ‘What else affects our wellbeing?’ No one responded, so she said, ‘It could be where you live, but you’re not always there...When you relax your breathing slows right down, your heart rate slows, muscles relax.’ HY8 told the pupils to think about temperature, textures and materials.

At 3 pm all the groups gathered in the hall. CPA, CPB and the drama lady were really upset – some of the boys had ‘kicked off’ in their sessions. The CP drama lady was shaking, she was very distressed. She said that in the last session, a boy had said that the nursery rhyme activity was ‘for babies’ and that it was patronising, and asked her what was the ‘intellectual underpinning’ of the exercise. The CP drama lady said that if that had been the first session it would have ruined the whole launch, because she would have lost confidence. Her sisters agreed. Apparently, once the boy in the CP drama lady’s session had belittled her, the other pupils in the group became unco-operative, perhaps, she thought, out of a desire to keep in with the ringleader. The CP drama lady said to me, ‘I planned that activity from the heart – you know, you were at the meeting.’ I felt really upset for the sisters – I could see some boys looking at us and sniggering. HY8 was told about what had happened, and she said she would discipline the offenders. HY8 said the teacher in the CP drama lady’s session had identified the boy who was the ‘ring leader’. HY8 said, ‘I warned you – this is the naughty kids today.’ HY8 said that the ringleader boy ‘has issues with women’ and is a ‘well-known nuisance’. CPA and CPB had also had a bad afternoon. During the sensory trail, some boys had banged a drum loudly near the head of a blindfolded boy, and then they had started hitting him over the head with drum sticks: the teacher had to intervene to break it up. The sisters said they were shocked by the aggression of the boys. While I was talking to the sisters, HY8 and

the teachers handed round the evaluation forms. Ms X said that she had never known pupils turn props into weapons: she said she had been using the same props for years in her drama classes and had never had them turned into ‘bazookas’ etc. I walked across the hall to get my coat from the table where I had left it, and the boys who had baited the CP drama lady said to me, ‘Miss, Miss – we’ve finished’ and handed me a sheet: under the heading, ‘How could the day have been better?’ they had written ‘Have no school’. HY8 asked the pupils to give the artists a round of applause and the pupils went home. I helped the CP workers load up their van, and I went home at 4 pm.

Reflection

In Chapter One of this thesis, I noted that Creative Partnerships is rooted in the tradition of child-centred, experiential learning. Frank Furedi (2009: 157) has spoken out against the move away from academic study towards experiential learning, on the grounds that ‘The turn from formal teaching towards learning and experience invariably encourages the downsizing of the intellectual content of education’ and that this intellectual downsizing infantilises young people. Furedi’s critique of progressivism has led him to be dismissed as ‘a good hater’ and a reactionary (Ryan, 2010), yet validation for Furedi’s theory within the context of this CP project came not from a middle class adult but from a 13-year-old working class boy, who of his own volition questioned the intellectual underpinning of what he termed the “babyish” CP drama activity. Furedi (2009: 155) challenges the idea that marginalised people are empowered by having their “street knowledge” recognised in formal settings, and he condemns the current celebration of street knowledge in schools as a misguided activity that limits pupils’ access to knowledge that might broaden their horizons. Whether or not Furedi is correct in this assertion, the findings of this present study suggest that pupils may not actually possess “instinctive” street knowledge that might be meaningfully contrasted with “unnatural” academic knowledge in the classroom. A striking feature of this CP project was the thinness of the pupils’ thinking about everyday matters: for example, the pupils found it difficult to go beyond the most obvious uses for household objects, apart from turning them into ‘bazookas’, and

they struggled to imagine simple scenarios to mime, and were more at ease enacting nursery rhymes. On the whole, the pupils were dependent upon the adults to help them respond to the CP activities, which were designed to build upon their “natural” street knowledge in order to develop their understanding of wellbeing and sense of place, and the fact that the pupils were not able to bring street knowledge to bear upon simple activities, such as the miming of employment and modes of transport, suggests that experiential learning based on street knowledge is no more accessible to pupils than scholarly learning.

It is ironic that a project on wellbeing compromised the CP drama lady and her sisters’ sense of wellbeing, and the ‘naughty boy’ incident arguably highlights the problem of failing to consider the implications of using an un-interrogated construct, such as wellbeing or indeed creativity, as the basis for an educational experience. When challenged, the underdeveloped rationale of the CP project produced a distressing, rather than illuminating, educational experience.

SECTION B: Observation of pupils' follow-up lessons

On Tuesday 5th May 2009, I returned to Church Road Secondary School to observe two Year 8 pupils' lessons, in which the ideas about wellbeing and the use of space stimulated by the CP launch days were developed.

Diary entry, 5th May 2009

At **10.15** I observed a mixed ability history/geography lesson, which had started prior to my arrival. The teacher showed the pupils a PowerPoint slide containing a quotation from Michael Winner, 'It's grim up north.'

The teacher asked the class, 'What was hard about the miners' strike?'

- No money.

The teacher asked, 'How would that make them feel? What emotions might they be feeling?'

- I dunno.
- Sad.
- They might love each other more; cherish.

The teacher then asked them to turn their attention to their desks. Each table had a photocopied image on it and a sheet of sugar paper. The teacher asked the pupils to look at the photo and write their thoughts and feelings about it on the sugar paper. The teacher said it was a carousel activity, and to move around the tables on her command.

The photos were:

Building the Tyne Bridge

A train at a station

Grey's Monument

Miners and a pit pony

Men carrying a 'Jarrow Crusade' banner

Men with 'strike' placards

A family outside a terrace house

I wandered around the room and recorded what the children had written on the sugar paper:

- They are building the Tyne Bridge.
- They are using teamwork.
- Strike.
- Protesting against something.
- The people are from Jarrow.
- People on strike – protesting for or against something.
- Some kind of crusade.

I listened to the pupils discussing the pictures. The children looking at the photo of the men on strike said, 'They are playing the harmonica – trying to get attention – trying to get a message across.' I noticed that the children had defaced a number of the photos: they had drawn hats and moustaches on some of the men on strike.

The pupils moved tables again, and I observed the pupils looking at the photo of the miners with the pit pony. This was the third group to look at this photo, so there were lots of words already written on the sugar paper:

- Stables
- Horse
- 2 horses
- Destroying horses
- Pub
- Looks like a pub
- In a mine
- Stables – name tags on them
- Roof made of rock
- Horse

The teacher resumed the PowerPoint presentation and said that this lesson was about what the North East is, and 'Why people are passionate about living here.' The teacher played a slide- show of all the photos from the tables. When she got

to the strike photo, the teacher said, 'This confused a lot of people: strikers playing the harmonica. How can music help your wellbeing?' No one responded, so she said, 'It can boost your spirits up.' The teacher showed the pupils the modern-day photo of Grey's Monument and said, 'The world has developed.' The teacher said Newcastle used to be known for its heavy industry but is 'becoming more well-known as a city of culture; a city of art; a city of music.' The teacher ended the lesson by saying that the North East has 'changed drastically from the 1920s until now.'

After lunch, an Art and Design teacher (ADT) took me to her art classroom. It had tables with vices, woodwork equipment, and art materials. ADT got out a mini cube that the design teacher (who had attended the CP planning meeting) had made. She placed the mini cube beside lengths of wood that the design teacher had left out for her. ADT informed me that each child would make a mini cube. The mini cube was a 20 cm x 20 cm frame made from pine. It was wrapped in translucent, yellow painted gummed paper that contained leaves and seeds. I thought that it was quite pretty, and I asked ADT if the cube would be used to hold tea lights. ADT said she didn't know what the cubes would be used for.

The children arrived and ADT told them to gather around a workbench with her to review their land art homework. She said, 'The last lesson was seven days ago – what do you remember?'

- Andrew Goldsworthy.
- We watched a video about hills.
- Sheep were interesting – they were pink.
- Cosmic speculation.

ADT showed the pupils the mini cube and said, 'This is part of your final challenge, final outcome.' She asked the pupils, 'What do you notice?'

- It's natural materials.
- The paper is covered in glue.

ADT asked, 'Can you make any links?'

- Reminds me of the big cube from the launch day.

Then ADT said, 'Let's distil and draw out useful information.'

ADT showed the pupils how to mark the required lengths on the wood and told them to place the wood in the vice and cut it. She told them to split into groups and said, 'Choose groups – choose carefully – not just friends, think about practical skills.' The remainder of the lesson was devoted to cutting lengths of wood.

Reflection

The history/geography lesson on the relationship between place, identity and wellbeing further illustrates the problem of organising lessons around pupils' out of school knowledge, rather than gearing lessons towards the development of pupils' understanding and awareness through interaction with formal knowledge: although the pupils tried hard to respond empathetically to the photographs, they lacked sufficient knowledge of local history to discuss the lesson's theme in any depth. The art lesson was also problematic, in terms of supporting the CP project's exploration of wellbeing. Consistent with the underdeveloped rationale of the CP project, the art teacher made no attempt whatsoever to uncover the rationale of cube-building. Instead, she followed the design teacher's instructions without asking the point of this endeavour, and the pupils were equally passive, cutting up lengths of wood without asking what the cube was for. The production of miniature versions of the Pod Hideaway arguably highlights the difficulty of using conceptual art in educational contexts: when divorced from the originator's concept, the work of art is reduced to its physical components, which in themselves may be of little interest. Ultimately, the children were cutting up and gluing together pieces of wood for no obvious reason. Previously, the CP visual artist had explained to the pupils that the Pod Hideaway was about 'using nature as the theme for wellbeing'; 'thinking outside the box' and exploring what happens when our work is continued, and altered, by others. These themes were not communicated by the CP visual artist to the Church Road art teacher. During the art lesson, the absence of any understanding of the CP visual artist's ideas

produced a similar effect to the absence of the pupils' knowledge of local history in the history/geography lesson: without the knowledge of the artistic intention of the Pod Hideaway, the art lesson's theme could not be adequately explored.

Although I was permitted to observe these lessons, I was not allowed to view the winning design for the outdoor wellbeing space or attend the awards ceremony, and do not therefore know the final outcome of this CP project.

SECTION C: Interviews with pupils; creative practitioners; a creative agent; a local artist

While I had enjoyed a great deal of freedom as an observer, my freedom as an interviewer was more limited. For example, I was not able to interview the teachers at Church Road Secondary School, and HY8 selected a group of Year 8 pupils for me to interview in her presence, and requested a full transcript of the interview. Nevertheless, I managed to arrange four interviews, which took place in May 2009:

- A group interview with four Year 8 pupils from Church Road Secondary School.
- A group interview with the five creative practitioners involved with the Church Road CP project.
- An interview with a creative agent employed by my local CP but not involved in the Church Road CP project.
- An interview with a local artist who teaches graphic design in a college of further education, and has never been involved with CP.

The interviews were intended to cover three themes: the definition of creativity; assessment; employability. The interviews were tape recorded and fully transcribed.

The definition of creativity

Given that the NACCCE's (1999) construct of creativity provided the foundation for Creative Partnerships, it seemed logical to begin my interviews by asking individuals their views on creativity. When I asked the Year 8 pupils how they would define creativity, they said: 'Creativity is what you can imagine, what you can do, and it's if you try to do it...creativity is like imagination really' (Pupil A); 'Art isn't all about creativity; there's lots of different methods of creativity' (Pupil C); 'Not doing a normal, average thing; doing something a bit more interesting' (Pupil B). When I asked the CP creative practitioners their views on creativity, they said that creativity means being able to 'look at something from a different angle and make something of that' (Ms X); being able to 'apply yourself laterally to any problems and solve them that way... breaking rules' (CP visual artist);

‘being able to adapt to situations’ (CPA); being willing ‘attack a problem, rather than run away from it’ (CP drama lady); ‘trying out ideas and taking risks’ (CPB).

When I asked the creative agent her views on creativity, she stated:

It’s that capacity to look at a situation that’s given - an idea or concept; a reality - and see a whole range of directions that you might go in with it, and select some of those, be willing to try them out, be willing to come back and try others out. So it’s about flexibility of response really, and building up those skills that enable you to follow a direction to *change*, to *change*, to *change*. I mean, the least creative people are people that set out on a path and can only continue on that path, and really struggle with change. (Creative Agent)

The pupils, creative practitioners and the creative agent expressed views on creativity consistent with the NACCCE’s (1999: 29) definition of creativity as ‘Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value’. Their belief that creativity is associated with having a “can-do” attitude is also consistent with the views of the American psychologist, Robert Sternberg, whose research on creativity is referenced by the NACCCE. It would appear, then, that the NACCCE’s chosen definition of creativity has become the orthodoxy in the context of CP. In contrast, when asked about creativity, the local artist (who has never worked with CP and is not aware of the organisation) gave a very different response:

I teach graphic design, and graphic designers can’t afford to be poncey artists and wait for inspiration or wait for something awful to happen in their lives so that they can put it onto canvas and we can all share their pain. I teach how to get ideas, ideas generation techniques, so for me I think a lot of it is hard work, and I think of myself as more of a trooper than as an especially creative person. (Local Artist)

The local artist denigrated the Romantic notion of the artist as a creative conduit (see Chapter Two), and positioned himself instead as a master of skills, in a variant on the medieval notion of the artist. As the interview progressed, the local artist revealed his distaste for conceptual art, in which traditional painting techniques are abandoned in favour of installation pieces, and his antipathy towards conceptual art perhaps explains his resistance to the privileging of “inspiration” over perspiration in the production of art. What is particularly interesting here, is that the local artist’s definition of creativity relates to his reflection on the production of art, while the definitions of creativity offered by individuals involved with arts-based activities via CP do not: instead, their

definitions relate to the notion of adaptability, derived from psychology (see Chapter Two).

Assessment

Given the government's preoccupation with the standards agenda, I was interested in the respondents' views on assessment. The Church Road CP project centred on the design of an outdoor learning space, and the tutor group with the winning design was to be awarded a prize of £100, so I asked the Year 8 pupils their opinion on the likely criteria for a winning design. I received the following replies, to which the other pupils nodded their agreement:

I'd say whichever one would get most used, and which one's like, you know, like if you had some, like a colourful chair, that is creative because of the colours and that, but then if you had something maybe like a room, like the dark room on the day, then that would be more creative, 'cause it sort of gets used more, and that. (Pupil A)

I think, like, if you did win the landscape thing, I think you've got to have something that everyone would enjoy...and that you wouldn't have people constantly taking over, declaring it their space and it wouldn't get trashed. (Pupil C)

When I asked the creative practitioners the same question, I received the following reply, to which the other creative practitioners expressed their agreement:

Well, we were encouraging them to award different ideas, to reward the most creative but also the most practical, or the optimum of the two. And also it's very important that the kids have that brief, it's important that they start off being extremely creative, whatever they want first, and then go, 'How would we make that practical?' and rein it in. (Ms X)

The Church Road pupils believed that the most practical design would win the competition, and their pragmatism is reminiscent of Miles' (2004) account of the CP skate park project, reported in Chapter Six of this thesis. Ms X, like the architect overseeing the skate park project, wanted the Church Road pupils to play with ideas, rather than fixate on practicalities, but the comments expressed by the pupils that I interviewed suggest that the Church Road pupils, like the skate park pupils (Miles, 2004), believe it is more important from the outset to design something useful than to be creative *per se*.

Because I had attended the planning meeting on 6th March at Church Road Secondary School, I knew that the professional architect appointed to work on the construction of the outdoor learning space had said that the ‘kids are contributing to the design; not building it’ and that it was the job of the architects to ‘translate those ideas into a practical reality’. The pupils’ theory that the winning design would be the most practical design was, therefore, probably sound. However, I was curious to uncover the pupils’ beliefs over the absolute, rather than relative, value of the pupils’ ideas for the outdoor learning space, so I asked them what they thought might happen if a professional architect entered their design competition. The pupils agreed that the pupils’ ideas would be ‘better’, although it was not clear whether or not they thought that the pupils would *win* the competition. In order to probe this issue further, I asked the creative agent if she was surprised to hear that a group of 12 and 13-year-olds taking part in a CP project thought that they might produce a better design than a professional architect. The creative agent replied:

But they might have been able to. They might have come up with a better idea. Just because they’re *young* doesn’t mean that they won’t have, but then they probably wouldn’t have been able to present it in the professional way that a landscape architect might have, but actually the nub of their idea, because it was a space thing, it was for people their age to use it in their context, they actually may have had far more expertise in whole swathes of that object than a landscape architect who was a grown-up, who didn’t know the area, who wasn’t at the school, so who knows who would have the better idea? Now, one assumes that the presentations would have been quite different and at quite a different level, but if the person that was assessing what came to them was actually looking at the quality of idea, it’s not age based. It’s not even experience based. (Creative Agent)

Given that the creative agent had previously defined creativity as adaptation, we might expect her to assert that the architect’s greater experience would lead him/her to produce the winning design, but instead the creative agent shifted towards a Romantic account of the artist as the point of genesis, in which inspiration and ownership, rather than ‘age’ or ‘experience’, are of paramount importance. In so doing, the creative agent was presumably guarding against any suggestion that CP projects are not meaningful, and this *volte face* over creativity is unlikely to be something peculiar to this particular creative agent: as noted previously, the NACCCE (1999) report’s convoluted account of creativity makes

it possible for individuals to switch between Romantic and scientific accounts of creativity in order to defend the operation of CP.

The soundness of the theory that the ideas of Year 8 pupils might be as good as the ideas of a professional architect is perhaps undermined by the local artist's observation of the impact of assessment on the generation of ideas in the classroom:

[Pupils] are so unused to crediting ideas and not product, they don't even recognise them as ideas. And I think that's what's getting lost. You know, in school it's all about product; it's all about doing the exams.
(Local Artist)

According to the local artist, the generation of ideas and the ability to judge the quality of one's ideas require purposeful effort and time, which is currently being invested in the creation of art products that can be marked in examinations, making it unlikely that pupils will generate, or possibly even recognise, interesting ideas in the classroom today. The local artist's theory was supported by a statement made by the creative practitioner, Ms X. When asked about assessment, Ms X, stated:

Well I got an excellent mark in art A level, I can't draw; I can't create. I just worked out what the teacher wanted me to do to get a good mark, and I just went, 'I'll jump through that hoop'. All I did, I just splashed, literally I just went, 'Right, I'm going to get some mud and throw it at a piece of work, and then that's going to be my first piece and then I'm going to get paint to do the same', and I got top marks for it because I knew that's all I needed to do. (Ms X)

In spite of Ms X's acknowledgement of her own instrumental reasoning as a schoolgirl, within the Church Road CP project there was a noticeable tension over the importance of ideas and products, with Ms X wanting the pupils to generate wild and interesting ideas, and then 'rein in' those ideas, and the pupils wanting to employ maximum efficiency to win the competition with the most likely design. A similar tension over process and outcome has been exposed in a number of other studies of CP, as discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis. In particular we might recall Thomson *et al's* (2006) discussion of the play that was not performed and Miles' (2004) discussion of the skate park that was not built: in both cases, the pupils considered the projects to be non-events, and the supposed importance accorded to the generation of ideas, enshrined in government documents such as *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years* (DCMS, 2001), was shown to be a

fantasy. Consistent with the outcome-based standards agenda, pupils at Church Road Secondary School, as elsewhere, appear to equate success with tangible outcomes, rather than intellectual stimulation. Furthermore, the pupils' belief that ideas are of secondary importance to products is aligned with the NACCCE's (1999: 29) definition of creativity as imaginative activity bound-up with outcomes that are of 'value', meaning that pupils' instrumental attitude towards the generation of ideas is, in fact, the orthodoxy.

Employability

My final set of interview questions related to employability. My interest in this phenomenon stemmed from New Labour's assertion that CP might help disadvantaged pupils develop the modes of thought and behaviour valued by employers (see DCMS, 2001). In order to probe pupils' thinking about the difference between academic and non-academic credentials (with the latter ostensibly developed through such things as CP), I asked the pupils whether they would be surprised to hear that the manager of a local supermarket had employed a friend of theirs who was a member of a band, but had no formal qualifications, rather than a friend of theirs who had good GCSEs but was not in a band. Pupils A and C responded as follows: 'I suppose you wouldn't be that disappointed, because the one without the GCSEs, that's pretty much what they can get. But the one with the GCSEs can, sort of, go on and do better things (Pupil A); 'Yeah. Because they've got GCSEs, they've got a wider range of jobs available to them' (Pupil C). Pupil B responded differently, stating:

The people at the supermarket, they've got to work with people, and they've got to have a good attitude...let's say that you're working with ASDA, going to loads of tills each day, you're working with loads of people, but if you were doing exams 24/7, no one would maybe employ you, because you had no nice attitude to get along with people. (Pupil B)

Pupil B later expanded upon this, stating that a creative person is 'very creative when talking to customers and he can sell things to you.' When I asked the creative practitioners the same question, they all agreed that the candidate with the formal qualifications would get the job in the local supermarket, although they agreed with the CP visual artist's assertion that 'Sometimes qualifications, the

exam qualifications, don't actually reflect what happens in the real world', and that the best candidate is not always the one with the formal qualifications.

Apart from Pupil B's suggestion that employers might think that "swots" are less people-oriented than musicians, my interview questions failed to elucidate what the pupils and creative practitioners felt was the qualitative difference between formal qualifications and the kind of experiential learning offered by CP in terms of gaining employment. The waters were further muddied by a revelation made by the CP visual artist:

From my experience of going through the degree system, if I hadn't gone through my foundation degree first, I wouldn't be able to do what I do now, because that was a more down to earth, practical grounding in art. When I went and did my full degree, that was more up in the sky, airy-fairy, conceptual, which in the real world, unless you are a famous artist, you can't do, to a certain degree. (CP visual artist)

The CP visual artist's claim that skills-based study is more useful to professional practice than the study of 'airy-fairy' conceptual art arguably challenges the usefulness of CP, which does not attempt to train pupils in specific skills, such as the use of watercolour paint, but instead seeks to develop pupils' creative thinking. In light of the visual artist's claim that instruction in conceptual art is *not* useful for individuals seeking to gain generic employment in the arts, it is perhaps surprising that he chose to devise the Pod Hideaway, a conceptual installation piece, as the focal point of this CP project. When I asked the local artist his views on arts-based education and employability, he expressed the belief that a musical education, for example, is at best irrelevant, and at worst undermines the artist's authenticity; an argument he supported by citing British musicians who have enjoyed international success:

If you go to a music school, like the Paul McCartney Performance School, or Newcastle College's new ten-million pound performing arts block, then to people like me, that kind of gives you less credibility than if you had no training, if you see what I mean? The Beatles never went to a music school; The Who never went to a music school; The Pistols, none of those great bands ever went to a college to learn how to play music, they just did it. (Local Artist)

Clearly, the local artist's assertion that great pop artists of the twentieth century did not 'learn how to play music, they just did it' is inconsistent with his previous rejection of the privileging of inspiration over perspiration. Furthermore, when

asked his views on fine art and employability, the local artist was vociferous in his condemnation of society's preoccupation with celebrity artists, such as Tracey Emin and Damien Hirst, who arguably fit into the same "anti-skills" category as The Sex Pistols. The inconsistency of the local artist's opinions on the arts is perhaps symptomatic of the complex interplay of ideas about the creative process, as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. However, the CP visual artist and the local artist appeared to share the conviction that 'celebrity artists' have been very successful in terms of generating income and notoriety, but produce the kind of art that is far removed from the 'bread-and-butter' work undertaken by most professional artists in the UK, such as graphic designers.

In contrast to the ambivalence towards the relationship between arts-based activities and employability expressed by the pupils, creative practitioners and the local artist, the creative agent appeared to be certain that CP *does* enhance pupils' employability, and she echoed the sentiments expressed by the teachers in Shelby Woolf's (2008) study, reported in Chapter Six of this thesis, who praised CP's ability to develop working class pupils' communication skills:

I've had a lovely experience in another primary school that I'm working with, they're doing a project with radio professionals, and they want to look at speaking skills particularly. And you know, their *head girl* at primary school, incredibly confident in terms of writing, if they ask her to talk at assembly, she can't transfer those linguistic skills that she shows in her writing to speech, where she goes back to a very strong [Town Name] syntax, 'Where we were, us was playing, um, you know, cricket', it wasn't cricket, but 'Us was playing cricket, and we was'. Now, she wouldn't write that. But she still speaks it... So that radio project was helping people to think about speech, to listen to themselves, to start to look at speech patterns, how we use speech, where does speech work. Now, if you think about the impact that might have on those young people in their speech in a professional context, in an interview, it's enormous. (Creative Agent)

For the creative agent, the relationship between CP and employability did not boil down to the development of skills and aptitudes necessary to work in the creative industries, but to the development of individuals' decorum. (There is, however, scant evidence to confirm this link; see Chapter Four.) Finally, during the interview Ms X made a rather poignant observation related to employability:

I was asking [the Church Road pupils], 'Give me one job in the world' I mean, there must be thousands and thousands of jobs that they know, and some of them, when somebody else said the job they had in their head it really stumped them. And it's, like, really what you want from a creative person is just to be able to constantly throw out ideas. (Ms X)

Given that the Church Road pupils, living in an area of high generational unemployment, struggled to name a job, it is unlikely that this particular CP project will make a great deal of difference to their employment prospects.

SECTION D: Discussion

In offering a detailed observation record of the CP training sessions, the CP planning meetings and the Church Road CP project, my aim was to enable readers (after the theory of Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to be “present” at these events, in order to “experience” how it feels to plan a CP project and take part in a CP project. This approach was chosen so that readers might be able to judge for themselves such things as how much fun it is to take part in a CP project, and to thereby minimise the risk of researcher bias over the interpretation of events (see Chapter Eight). The purpose of the interviews was to uncover individuals’ ideas about the value and purpose of Creative Partnerships, and “creativity” more broadly, in order to provide a richer understanding of the Church Road CP project. In this final section, an analysis is offered of the findings, summarised below:

- During the teachers’ CP training session, the teachers did not appear to find the government’s desire to instruct teachers in how to be spontaneous and creative illogical, and did not appear to identify any tension in the government’s desire to enforce the standards agenda and promote CP. In spite of their desire for pupils to accept ‘the *status quo*’, the teachers expressed the belief that CP may offer a welcome relief from performativity.
- During the creative agents’ CP training session, there was a strong focus on identifying “what works” via CP projects.
- During the Church Road CP planning meeting, the teachers appeared to be confused over the nature of wellbeing and art, and there was a marked contrast between the vagueness of the project’s rationale and the clarity over the timetabling of educational experiences.
- During the interviews, the respondents’ beliefs about art were ambiguous, particularly with regard to the role of inspiration in the creative process.
- There was a sense of confusion over the purpose of the Pod Hideaway.
- The Church Road pupils seemed to encounter difficulty in accessing experiential learning.
- During the teachers’ CP training session, the teachers commented upon their pupils’ ignorance, and during the Church Road CP project, the creative

practitioners commented upon the pupils' inability to perform simple activities, such as naming a job.

- The creative agent's remarks arguably demonstrate how the NACCCE's (1999) construct of creativity permits individuals to switch between scientific and Romantic accounts of the creative process to defend the operation of CP.
- The interviewees appeared to be uncertain over the extent to which arts-based activities enhance pupils' employability.
- The interviewees appeared to be divided over the relative importance of process and product; with pupils attaching significance to end results, and creative practitioners attaching significance to the development of ideas.
- In spite of Jowell's (2002) claim that CP might re-engage disaffected young people, the most disruptive Year 8 pupil, who 'makes the other pupils naughty', was excluded prior to the Church Road CP project. Another Year 8 pupil, identified as a 'well-known nuisance', who 'has a problem with women', was chastised for questioning the rationale of the nursery rhyme activity.

This empirical enquiry began by asking the question, what sense do pupils, teachers and creative practitioners make of Creative Partnerships? The data suggest that the individuals involved with the Church Road CP project found themselves in a state of 'earnest confusion' (Fleming, 2010), with many aspects of the project, such as the Pod Hideaway and the nature of wellbeing, remaining opaque throughout. This is, perhaps, to be expected in the Looking-Glass Land of English education, in which the purpose of education is obscured by a welter of plans and targets; a phenomenon illustrated by my encounter with the instructor from CAPE UK, who did not know what was to be done with the creative agents' evaluations of CP, but knew for certain that evaluations *must be done*. According to Ball (2010: 108), there is 'a great deal of ad hocery, short-termism and bluster in the recent history of education reform', and individuals' determined effort to make sense of top-down policy, thrown together with little regard for logic, is perhaps to be admired. In the words of the CP drama lady, the teachers and creative practitioners planned the Church Road CP project 'from the heart', and the confusion surrounding the purpose and value of the project must in part be attributed to New Labour's education policy, which encouraged individuals to set

and meet pragmatic goals rather than interrogate ideas. Although Tessa Jowell (2002) launched Creative Partnerships at a conference on Arts and Young Offenders, the issue of youth justice is tangential to my thesis, and this chapter does not attempt to explain the exclusion of ‘the naughty boy’ prior to the Church Road CP project, although, as stated previously, this exclusion is odd, given the alleged function of Creative Partnerships. Instead, the remainder of this chapter considers the storm clouds of confusion that might be said to have gathered around three issues: the de-materialisation of art, ‘cultural capital’, and the synthetic amalgamation of disparate accounts of the creative process.

The de-materialisation of art

The Church Road CP project utilised conceptual art, and as discussed previously, the pupils encountered some difficulty with experiential learning during this project. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss *why* conceptual art is celebrated in the art world today, and why New Labour chose to provide funding for new art galleries to display conceptual art, such as the Baltic in Gateshead, it is perhaps necessary to briefly consider the connection between conceptual art and experiential learning in order to understand some of the tensions within the Church Road CP project. As might be expected, the definition of conceptual art is not set in stone, but Elisabeth Schellekens (2007) offers an account that sheds some light upon the Church Road CP project:

The most fundamentally revisionary feature of conceptual art is the way in which it proclaims itself to be an art of the mind rather than the senses: it rejects traditional artistic media because it locates the artwork at the level of *ideas* rather than that of *objects*. As process matters more than physical material, and because art should be about intellectual inquiry and reflection rather than beauty and aesthetic pleasure, the work of art is said to be the idea at the heart of the piece in question... Art is ‘de-materialised’; art is prior to its materialisation and is ultimately rooted in the agency of the artist. (Schellekens, 2007; italics in original)

Schellekens’ account goes some way towards explaining the Church Road pupils’ inability to make sense of certain activities, such as the creation of ‘living sculptures’, and the art teacher’s lack of engagement with the miniature Pod Hideaway. The observation and interviews undertaken in this study suggest that the art was ‘de-materialised’ and (for whatever reason) created a vacuum in lieu

of an idea. Since experiential learning is dependent upon pupils' reflection upon their experience, it cannot occur when educational activities are based on "street" experience that is non-existent, and when the ideas behind conceptual pieces do not "enter the mind" of the pupil (or indeed, the mind of the art teacher). This theory is consistent with Philip Hensher's (2010) claim that conceptual art demands sophisticated reasoning in order for it to succeed. Hensher (2010: 3), like the CP visual artist and local artist interviewed in this study, claims that artists' reputations today are not built upon their technical accomplishment, but on their ability to 'struggle with the image' in a sophisticated manner, and he goes further, stating that while children can be taught technical skills, they are unable to produce conceptual art:

A work of conceptual art by a child is not imaginable. The possibility of a child prodigy in the serious world of art has by now disappeared; try thinking of the art of a seven-year-old that might prefigure a Jeff Koons in the way Picasso's adolescent work prefigures his adult work, and you see the problem. (Hensher, 2010: 3)

If Hensher is correct, then Year 8 pupils - by dint of their immaturity - would not be able to engage in a meaningful way with the production of conceptual art, thus making the usefulness of the educational experiences offered by the Church Road CP project somewhat limited. A similar point was also made by the local artist, who claimed that 'art is a very difficult thing to understand, and I think most of the people who make these decisions [about arts-based education] don't really understand it.' Thus, while it might be considered logical for CP to promote the type of arts-based activities most closely aligned with wealth generation in the art world today, and to coach pupils to 'the struggle with the image', rather than develop their technical accomplishment, the rationale of this endeavour is shown, in practice, to be somewhat naive.

Cultural capital

There is, I would argue, a connection between the notion of the 'agency of the artist', as promoted by exponents of conceptual art, and the notion of self-reliance, as promoted by exponents of neoliberalism, that has a bearing on Creative Partnerships. For example, the artist Damien Hirst was raised in a working class family in Leeds and struggled academically at school, yet by 2009 he was worth

£200m (Hattenstone, 2009). Commenting on his remarkable career, Hirst (2009) proclaimed: 'I don't believe in genius, I believe in freedom. I think anyone can do it. Anyone can be like Rembrandt.' Hirst thus defines the agency of the artist as the willingness to make use of materials that are available to all of us, and his "rags to riches" life story appears to confirm Sternberg's (1996: 20) assertion that successful people have a 'can-do attitude' that enables them to make the best of any situation. According to Hirst, the key to personal success is 'freedom', and his account of the artist thus complements the neoliberal fascination with *laissez-faire* and highlights the importance of creating a climate in which individuals are free to access the arts, rather than a climate in which politicians are expected to intervene in the market to assist individuals. In the document that launched Creative Partnerships, New Labour duly flagged up the importance of offering socially and economically deprived pupils access to the arts enjoyed by middle class and elite pupils:

The problem remains that some children are quite cut off from the extraordinary potential offered outside school by the people and resources available in this country's first class cultural institutions and creative industries. If their parents do not take them there, and their teachers cannot either, the chances are that not only will they miss out while at school, but they will be excluded for the rest of their lives...there have never been systematic national policies working towards bringing together all cultural and creative practitioners across art forms to provide children will a full range of cultural opportunities in the most deprived areas. (DCMS, 2001: 17)

Arguably, New Labour's plan to introduce socially and economically deprived pupils to the arts via Creative Partnerships was *not* guided primarily by the desire to nurture the next Damien Hirst (who obviously succeeded in the art world in spite of the absence of 'systematic national policies' on the arts during his own school days), but was instead bound up with the neoliberal belief that individuals' 'cultural capital', defined by Bourdieu (1986) as the non-financial social assets that give individuals a higher status in society, may help individuals thrive in the highly competitive, global employment market. Phillip Brown (2006: 394) notes that in the battle for credentials to secure the best jobs in the free market, the 'parents of elites and the middle classes have mobilized whatever material or cultural resources they can bring to bear on the outcome of this competition', and these resources do indeed include the extra-curricular arts activities identified by

the DCMS (2001). However, a parallel may be drawn between conceptual art, which is located at the level of an idea (Schellekens, 2007), and cultural capital, which is deemed important to economic survival, yet has a nebulous coinage. According to Grubb and Lazerson (2006: 303), cultural capital is not a body of formal knowledge, but is instead a particular way of presenting oneself to the world that is developed most easily by the children of ‘well-educated professionals and managers’, who are able to reinforce ‘those cognitive abilities, values and behaviours’ associated with high-status occupations. Creative Partnerships may therefore be viewed as an effort on the part of New Labour to help equalise the life chances of pupils in England by sharing middle class and elite cultural capital with the ‘have-nots’ (DCMS, 2001: 11). Thus, while both Shelby Woolf (2008) and the creative agent interviewed in this present study claim that some CP projects consciously strive to bring working class pupils’ communication skills in line with those of the middle and elite classes, for the most part CP presents itself as a vehicle for the promotion of a “Hirstian” outlook that is ostensibly developed through pupils’ engagement with creative activities.

While it would be wrong to criticise teachers’ and creative practitioners’ desire to help disadvantaged pupils to succeed in the international employment market, it is difficult to see how the kind of experiential learning on offer in the Church Road CP project helps redistribute the cultural capital held by middle class and elite individuals. As noted by Furedi (2009), educational activities that are constructed from pupils’ “street knowledge” risk trapping pupils in the here-and-now of their own experience, which obviously goes against the idea of giving disadvantaged pupils something currently in the possession of more privileged members of society. If we consider, for example, the Church Road pupils’ follow-up lesson on local history/geography, it is apparent that the pupils experienced difficulty in engaging with the material. Arguably, this was due to the teacher’s use of a type of pupil-centred instruction that, according to Michael Sheppard (2006: 167), has been promoted by government as part of a seemingly democratic process of ‘lifelong learning’, but which leaves instructors uncertain about what constitutes knowledge. Commenting upon the training of social workers, Sheppard states:

...there is little guidance on the relative weight which should be given to, say, formal knowledge as compared with experience in seeking to make sense of practice scenarios. Furthermore, there is also no indication of the way in which one form of knowledge may be chosen in preference to another or the criteria upon which this would be based. Why should we choose this particular form of knowledge rather than another? Why should we construct the situation in this way rather than that way? (Sheppard, 2006: 168)

Arguably, education has been transformed into a moral dilemma, in which teachers face imponderables, such as ‘What is more important, pupils’ responses to photographs, or information about photographs?’ At the CP training session for teachers (discussed earlier), the teachers vilified the slogan, ‘Teachers teach and young people learn’, which suggests that teachers are currently hostile towards what might be described as the old-fashioned belief in the pre-eminence of formal knowledge. However, if cultural capital is indeterminate, and if teachers and creative practitioners are uncertain about the criteria for the selection of one form of knowledge over another, how will CP help disadvantaged pupils develop the “know how” to gain access to high-status professions? Arguably, the distortion of Dewey’s (1916/1952) theory of child-centred learning by politicians, keen to hijack the notion of adaptability to promote the concept of economic self-reliance, has blinkered us to the importance of using formal knowledge as a stimulus to pupils’ self-development and as a means to cultivate social awareness through interaction with cultural materials. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is no evidence to support the idea that schemes such as CP have narrowed the wealth gap or increased social mobility in England (see Chapter Four). Ultimately, experiential learning in the context of CP is paradoxical, because pupils would need to already possess cultural capital in order to make sense of projects designed to impart cultural capital. Consider, for example, Ms X’s frustration over the Church Road pupils’ inability to mime modes of transport, and the architect’s frustration (reported by Miles, 2004) over his pupils’ inability to envisage anything other than a box-shaped skate park: presumably pupils with the “right” cognitive abilities, values and behaviours would have been able to demonstrate “creativity” in these circumstances.

The synthetic amalgamation of disparate accounts of the creative process

The NACCCE (1999: 29) report defines creativity as ‘Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value’. Chapter Two of this thesis exposed the NACCCE’s construct of creativity as a synthetic amalgamation of disparate accounts of the creative process, and the confusion surrounding the Church Road CP project is arguably the end-result of a central flaw in the account of creativity that underpins Creative Partnerships: in seeking to reconcile Romantic accounts of “other-worldly” inspiration with scientific accounts of real-world adaptation, the NACCCE (1999: 29) authors came up with a definition of creativity that married ‘Imaginative activity’ (which has Romantic connotations) and ‘value’ (which has pragmatic connotations), and thus produced an account of creativity that appears useful to everyone, but which is undermined in practice by the neoliberal agenda that it seeks to serve. The NACCCE authors’ intention, it seems, was to make the strongest possible case for the promotion of the arts in education under the Third Way, and their report was successful in that it led to the establishment of Creative Partnerships (see Chapter Five). However, Creative Partnerships (along with the rest of the English education) is located within the standards agenda, where value is associated with test scores and league tables, and it is therefore hardly surprising that pupils and teachers have come to connect ‘value’ with project outcomes, rather than ‘imaginative activity’. Turner-Bisset (2007) points out that means-end rationality is the antithesis of ‘flexibility of thought’ that psychologists such as Sternberg (1996) posit as fundamental to creativity, and the local artist interviewed in the Church Road study claims that the pursuit of performativity has divorced *reason* from the creative process, by minimising the time pupils spend thinking about art, and maximising the time pupils spend creating products that can be examined, which contradicts the scientific theory of creativity as the product of conscious deliberation (see for example, Kaufman & Sternberg, 2006). Indeed, the “mindlessness” of performativity has attracted widespread criticism, as in the following examples:

We are creating hordes of smart conformists. They know what they have to do to get ahead, but they have little understanding of why they do what they are doing. (Brown, 2006: 393)

In many countries – the English-speaking countries are good examples – students have adopted highly utilitarian and credentialist views of their schooling: utilitarian in the sense that they see their schooling as useful only to future employment, and credentialist in the sense that they concentrate on accumulating the credentials they think necessary, rather than the learning that credentials are supposed to represent. (Grubb & Lazerson, 2006: 301)

The NACCCE's "rational" account of creativity thus falters under the pressure of performance maximisation, yet so too does its "non-rational" account. As has already been stated, pupils and teachers do not seem to attach much significance to the play of imagination, in spite of the NACCCE's incorporation of 'imaginative activity' in its definition of creativity, and indeed there was a distinct lack of focus on imagination in the CP training session for creative agents that I attended, where the instructor from CAPE UK encouraged creative agents to put aside artistic considerations and to focus instead on 'measurable outcomes'. However, the pursuit of performativity means that there is also a lack of interest in the development of pupils' understanding of domain-specific 'constraints' that may have little bearing on pupils' examinations, but which are crucial to the successful deployment of creativity in real-world contexts (Heath, 1993:12). This phenomenon was evident in the Church Road CP project, where pupils were told that *they* would be designing an outdoor learning space, and that £100 would be awarded for the best design, when in reality the teachers knew that the winning design would need to be amended and translated into reality by professional architects with formal knowledge of design constraints.

The problems identified in my study of the Church Road CP project are unlikely to be exceptional: in seeking to appeal to Third Way ideas about the maximisation of the total social system, the authors of the NACCCE report married contradictory accounts of the creative process in their definition of creativity, and thereby provided a confused basis for Creative Partnerships. As a result, Creative Partnerships is unable to deploy either the "scientific" *or* Romantic accounts of creativity to counteract the standards agenda's abandonment of imagination and formal knowledge in the classroom, and is thus unable to address disturbing issues identified in this study, such as pupils'

inability to name a job, think of a novel use for a household object, or understand that London is not in Belfast.

Conclusion

In the end, it might be fair to say that no one is in a position to truly make sense of Creative Partnerships. On the one hand, the rationale of Creative Partnerships is simple: it aims to ‘inspire young people and help them learn’ by bringing creative practitioners into schools to work with disadvantaged pupils (www.creative-partnerships.com). On the other hand, the rationale of Creative Partnerships is complicated: it is founded upon a synthetic amalgamation of disparate accounts of the creative process (Chapter Two) and bizarrely seeks to enhance performativity by appearing to offer teachers and pupils freedom from performativity (Chapter Six). Creative practitioners employ techniques that seem straightforward, such as the use of mime in the Church Road CP project, but which rest upon rarefied art theory that is sometimes difficult to make sense of. In addition, CP projects take place in an educational context in which the criteria for the selection of one form of knowledge over another are not always well understood. I observed the Church Road CP project in 2009; seven years after the launch of CP, and during the various training sessions and planning meetings that I attended, I witnessed the diligent observance of protocol that had been established over time, but which was unaccompanied by any interrogation of the programme’s intellectual foundation. Commenting upon his party’s election defeat in 2010, former energy secretary, Ed Miliband, offered an appraisal of New Labour that arguably illuminates the experiences reported in this account of the Church Road CP project:

We tended to become caretakers of the system. We became more like technocrats and less like transformers of our politics and our country. By the time that we lost power, we found ourselves politically and ideologically beached. (Miliband, 2010)

Given that New Labour’s quest for performance maximisation left the government bereft of ideas about the purpose and value of politics, it is perhaps not surprising that the individuals reported in this study of Creative Partnerships found

themselves at times confused over the purpose and value of their own contribution to the operation of ‘the system’.

In the following chapter, I offer a conclusion to my examination of Creative Partnerships.

Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has attempted to further our understanding of Creative Partnerships by examining the ideas upon which the programme is based, and by looking at a particular instance of Creative Partnerships. In so doing, this thesis has demonstrated that Creative Partnerships is informed by progressivism (Chapter One); draws upon a tangle of ideas about human creative behaviour that is legitimised by the academic discourse (Chapter Two; Chapter Three); is guided by Third Way new interventionism (Chapter Four); is aligned with the standards agenda and the “what works” protocol (Chapter Five; Chapter Seven), and is somewhat muddled in practice (Chapter Six; Chapter Nine). As noted by Ball (2010: 189), New Labour’s education policies rarely had a single purpose or focus, and equity issues were very often subsumed within more general policy strategies and tied to goals concerned with other things such as ‘workforce skills’ and ‘the modernisation of the public sector’, and by its own admission, New Labour became befuddled by its obsession with performance maximisation (Chapter Nine), making it almost impossible to pin down the exact purpose of Creative Partnerships. However, although the rationale of Creative Partnerships might be hazy, the definition of creativity offered by the NACCCE report (1999) and the government’s own presentation of Creative Partnerships (DCMS, 2001) make it difficult for the would-be critic to challenge the purpose and value of Creative Partnerships. The Romantic account of CP’s purpose is beguiling, as it conjures up images of children being transported to new realms of possibility through the stimulation of their imagination (Chapter Two); the egalitarian account of its purpose is satisfying, as for centuries the door to the intellectual realm beyond our “dull reality” was barred to poor children, who were obliged to learn trade skills while rich children contemplated the arts (Chapter One); the “scientific” account of its purpose is seductive, as psychology tells us that we are all creative, and that such things as flexibility of thought can be developed through stimulation (Chapter Two); the “employability” account of its purpose is encouraging, as it suggests that the more creative, flexible and adaptable we become, the more suited we are to the demands of modern employment and the

more likely we are to succeed (Chapter Four; Chapter Five). With this bullet-proof justification for the programme in place, New Labour was able to triumphantly posit Creative Partnerships as the assertion of the right of the poor to gain access to the cultural capital of the elite; to throw off the shackles of low aspiration, and to embrace employment opportunities in the twenty-first century (DCMS, 2001). Yet no matter how impressive in theory, the rationale of Creative Partnerships is beset by contradictions that reveal themselves through empirical enquiry (Chapter Six; Chapter Nine). Transcending this world and gearing oneself towards the practicalities of this world are irreconcilable missions, and the evidence from the Church Road CP project and elsewhere (Chapter Nine; Chapter Six) suggests that children living in deprived areas are more receptive to the pragmatic, rather than the ethereal, message of Creative Partnerships. The Church Road pupils, in common with pupils elsewhere, appear to be in tune with the zeitgeist, and understand that ‘imaginative activity’ (NACCCE, 1999) is fun, but that ‘what counts is what works’ (Tony Blair, 1997), and the Romantic account of the creative process appears to have been “lost in translation”, to the dismay of the creative practitioners.

Clearly, there is something peculiar about Creative Partnerships that cannot be fathomed by examining the organisation’s policy documents or its practice. Indeed, Adorno (2006 b: 66) cautions that individuals’ attempts to shed light upon the operation of organisations such as Creative Partnerships may risk obscuring ‘the monstrousness of the system’ in which such organisations are mere ‘servile functionaries’ and thus *increase* rather than reduce ambiguity. At various points in this thesis, and in particular in Chapters Four and Seven, neoliberalism has been identified as a motivating factor for the instigation of Creative Partnerships, and this Conclusion therefore rounds-off my investigation of Creative Partnerships by examining how neoliberal theory informs education policy in general, in order to place Creative Partnerships within the ‘monstrous’ system that it serves. The approach taken in the Conclusion deviates from the method used in the previous chapters, where attention was focussed inwards to Creative Partnerships in order to draw out the various ideas that give existence to the organisation. In contrast, the Conclusion looks outwards, to the economic reasoning that is prior to the political impetus for Creative Partnerships, and critically evaluates the neoliberal economic principles that are absent from the discourses of creativity and

employability that constitute Creative Partnerships, in order to place Creative Partnerships within the system that it might be said to serve, and to challenge the merit of that service. Consistent with Michael Apple's (2006) recommendation that educational researchers should offer an alternative to, rather than simply a critique of, the neoliberal hegemony, this chapter ends with a consideration of the 'way forward'.

To gain a sense of the 'monstrousness' of neoliberalism, we might consider three slogans that arguably sum up this particular economic outlook:

"There is no such thing as society" (Margaret Thatcher, 1987)

"Greed is good" (from the movie, Wall Street, 1987)

"I shop, therefore I am"

(photographic silkscreen/vinyl by the artist, Barbara Kruger, 1987)

To facilitate an understanding of how these ideas inform education policy in England, this chapter offers an overview of the guiding principles of neoliberalism, after the work of Hill and Myatt (2010), followed by a consideration of how each of these principles is expressed in education policy today. This chapter is divided into four sections that consider: (1) the idea that the 'body social' is fictitious; (2) the idea that the pursuit of self-interest is good; (3) the idea that 'you are worth what you can get'; (4) the way forward. In order to understand what neoliberalism embraces, it is necessary to understand what it rejects, and part one therefore begins with a brief account of the British Welfare State.

1) The 'body social' is fictitious

In 1942, the Beveridge Report laid down a blue-print for a social security system for post-war Britain that would dispense with the Poor Law and ensure a basic minimum standard of living, below which no individual would be allowed to fall, by compelling individuals to make a financial contribution to their collective wellbeing. Within the space of a few years, the National Health Service was created; Butler's Education Act was passed (see Chapter One); a more generous and comprehensive scheme of insurance against sickness, accident and

unemployment was established, and family allowances, maternity and death grants were provided (Dawson & Wall, 1971: 46). As demonstrated in Chapter One of this thesis, Parliament had taken an interest in the public's welfare since the dawn of the modern state, and in medieval times the Church had been preoccupied with the shepherding of souls. The concept of assistance for the needy was, therefore, nothing new. However, according to Horton and Gregory (2009: 64), Sir William Beveridge's vision of the British Welfare State was founded on a 'benign notion of welfare linked to participation in society', and it is this notion of community that is attacked by exponents of neoliberalism, rather than wellbeing as such.

As stated in Chapter Seven, neoliberalism is based upon eighteenth century economic theory, and encompasses Jeremy Bentham's principle of utility (see Chapter One). In modern economic textbooks, the argument for utility is typically presented as follows:

Demand for individual goods results from consumers' attempts to make themselves as well off as possible, or to maximise 'utility'...utility is the benefit you get from having or doing something. We use the word interchangeably with 'benefit' or 'welfare' or 'well-being'...For every good, each consumer makes the choices that maximise his or her consumer's surplus, and in aggregate (given everyone's budget constraints) the total surplus of all consumers is maximised too. If something forces consumers to alter their choices compared with this 'free market' outcome, they will be worse off. (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 74; 77)

The belief that there is a link between individual autonomy and maximum utility is founded upon Bentham's rejection of the medieval concept of the 'body social', and at this juncture it is perhaps helpful to consider again Bentham's views on the community:

The community is a fictitious *body*, composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting as it were its *members*. The interest of the community then is, what? – the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it. (Bentham, 1789/1995: 307; italics in original)

Exponents of the free market model are thus opposed to the notion that the collective is the most reasonable model of society, since collectivism makes *everyone* worse off by constraining individual choice that might otherwise benefit the individual and produce surplus utility. Indeed, the idea that collectivism compromises wellbeing seemed to be validated during the 1970s, when it was suggested that 'personal incapacity and loneliness' had increased since the

establishment of the welfare state (Birch, 1974). Furthermore, in 1976 Jim Callaghan's Labour government was forced to seek a loan from the International Monetary Fund to prevent the collapse of sterling and the British economy; an indignity suffered by the British public along with strikes and fuel shortages, all of which seemed to confirm the suspicion that collectivism is inefficient.

Margaret Thatcher attempted to address the UK's economic difficulties through the introduction of neoliberal policy (see Chapter Four), and her intervention in education likewise constituted an attack on the concept of the 'body social', which had been identified as the root cause of Britain's malaise. As discussed in Chapter One, nineteenth century exponents of *laissez-faire* feared that government interference in education might undermine self-reliance, and we might therefore expect neoliberals to take issue with Butler's Education Act, since it was a cornerstone of the welfare state (albeit one laid by a Conservative). In fact, by the time Thatcher came to power in 1979, the comprehensive system had, for the most part, come to replace the tripartite system envisioned by Butler (which many had viewed as socially divisive), meaning that all pupils were now exposed to what might be termed 'scholarly learning'. This situation held some appeal for neoliberals, since classical education had long been associated with self-actualisation (see Chapter One). To recap briefly, the Renaissance humanists rejected the medieval view of education as the abandonment of the self through knowledge of the rules necessary for the sacred and secular operation of the collective, and they championed instead the notion of education as the constitution of the self through inward reflection. Thatcher's 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) duly enshrined such things as the teaching of Shakespeare, which arguably supported individualism rather than collectivism by helping pupils develop their 'inward man' (Martin Luther, 1520/1977:723), and at the same time attacked the collectivist underpinnings of the comprehensive system. Under Butler's Act, secondary schools were funded by taxpayers for the benefit of society, and parents had little knowledge of the relative quality of state schools, and were thus not in a position to exercise choice over their children's education and maximise the utility of that education. In order to remedy this situation, the ERA sought to establish an education "marketplace", in which parental choice was informed by league tables (see Chapters One; Four and Seven). The marketisation of education is an ongoing process: for example, in July 2010 the newly elected Coalition

government rushed the Academies Bill through Parliament, so that legislation would be in place in September 2010 that would permit more schools to opt out of LEA control and enable parents, charities and other organisations to set up Swedish-style ‘free schools’ (*The Guardian*, 2010).

Unfortunately, the free market model does not benefit everyone equally, since utility tends to be channelled upwards in free markets, and is thus not evenly distributed (Harvey, 2009); hence the emergence of the ‘super rich’ (Peston, 2008:7). For example, Thatcher’s privatisation of the industries that had been nationalised during the formation of the welfare state helped reinstate the wealth and power of the elite (whose interests had been thwarted by collectivism) by concentrating utility in the hands of shareholders; a move that did little to enhance the ‘utility’, or wellbeing, of ordinary men and women (Harvey, 2009). The unequal distribution of utility is also evident in our post-88 education system, where utility (in the form of credentials and attendant job opportunities) is channelled upwards, since well-off parents are able to ensure that their children are placed in “successful” schools, while poorer parents are not (see Chapter Seven). The impact of this upward channelling of utility has been widely debated, as in the following examples:

In England the proportion of students from the bottom three social classes attending university increased from 1.5 to 18.2 per cent between 1940 and 2000. But the proportion from the top three social classes increased from 8.4 to 47.8 per cent, so the absolute difference in attendance rates (though not the relative difference) increased over this period; the steady expansion of higher education has benefited higher classes substantially more than lower classes. (Grubb & Laverson, 2006: 304)

Figures obtained by the End Child Poverty campaign reveal that in vast areas of the country fewer than one in eight of children who receive free school meals leaves schools with five good GCSEs, including English and maths. Across England half of children reach that target, but for the 14% of children who qualify for free lunches that figure stands at just 21%. (Curtis & Carvel, 2008: 6)

Bright children from the poorest homes are currently seven times less likely to go to top universities than their wealthier peers, partly because their schools may not offer sought-after subjects such as modern foreign languages or single sciences. This gap has grown from 15 years ago, when the richest were six times more likely to get a place in the top third of universities, according to a government-commissioned review published earlier this year. (Vasagar, 2010)

When presenting the Academies Bill for its second reading in the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove (2010 b), claimed that, ‘Schools, instead of being engines of social mobility and guarantors of equality, are only perpetuating the divide between the wealthy and the poorest’. We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of Gove’s concern for the plight of England’s most deprived children, yet it is illogical for politicians who are ostensibly concerned with equality of opportunity to usher in yet more parental choice over education, since it is through exercising this choice that parents have unwittingly created a class divide in education: how can a socially divisive system of education be an engine of social mobility and a guarantor of equality?

2) The pursuit of self-interest is good

A central tenet of classical economics is rational choice theory, in which ethical judgements and values are held to be preferences. For example, one woman might choose to give money to a homeless person while another might choose to buy a sports car: being selfish is no worse than being altruistic; they are just different preferences (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 17). According to rational choice theory, ‘it is smart to be selfish’, because selfishness maximises your own material wellbeing, and through the ‘invisible hand of the market’ (as postulated by Adam Smith), it also produces the greatest good for the greatest possible number (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 17). Under the neoliberal model, business managers exercise choice in order to maximise utility (growth; stability; profit) for selfish reasons (personal wealth; power), and the neoliberal capitalist model is ‘authoritarian’ rather than democratic (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 115). Presumably, self-interest would prompt UK-based workers to make rather different choices about such things as the off-shoring of their jobs - if they had a say in matters - and it is clearly advantageous to be a business leader, rather than an employee, in the free market, because only the self-interest of a CEO is aligned with decision-making. On the grounds that the unequal distribution of wealth and power between business leaders and workers reflects individuals’ preferences, and that business leaders produce more utility than workers through the ‘invisible hand of the market’, successive neoliberal governments have passed laws that favour the interests of business

leaders and penalise workers by deregulating commerce, weakening the trade unions, and lowering the taxes of the super rich (Harvey, 2009). It has become commonplace for large firms to acquire smaller businesses through hostile takeovers, and to then asset-strip those companies, leaving staff demoralised or redundant (Peston, 2008), and notwithstanding public dismay over such things as the takeover of Cadbury's by Kraft in January 2010, business managers' pursuit of self-interest is admired, rather than vilified, by government. For example, former Trade and Industry Secretary, Peter Mandelson claimed, 'We want a society that celebrates and values its business heroes as much as it does its pop stars and footballers' (Mandelson, 1998, cited in Elliott & Atkison, 2007: 47). The message from our politicians is clear: we should not attempt to resist the pursuit of self-interest, but should instead aspire to become business managers, in the same way that we might aspire to be the next Madonna or David Beckham.

The celebration of the pursuit of self-interest has entered education via the discourse of meritocracy, which states that in a free market individuals may choose to gain a competitive advantage over one another through the accrual of credentials. Allegedly, in a meritocracy we are all free to make the most of our talents, and individuals who use their credentials to gain entry to elite universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge, and the top professions, such as investment banking and corporate law, deserve to live in 'gratuitous affluence' (Brown, 2006: 395). Education is posited as the passport to prosperity and empowerment, and the political message is simple: the government must ensure standards of education are consistently high (hence the standards agenda); parents must choose their children's schools wisely (hence the league tables); pupils must work hard to maximise the utility of their education by gaining credentials for employment. The purpose of supplementary educational programmes such as Creative Partnerships is to guarantee that this process is equitable and to absolve society of responsibility for the welfare of individuals that do not succeed: if a pupil chooses to live his adult life on the margins of society after taking part in educational programmes designed to maximise the utility of his education, then that lifestyle is simply his preference. The doctrine of meritocracy has been preached by politicians on both the left and the right, as in these examples from Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron:

Show me an educated youngster and I see someone with great prospects; show me school leavers with no qualifications – who still, deplorably, account for nearly one in ten of 16-year-olds – and I see lives of constant struggle and insecurity. (Blair, 1998: 10)

My vision is of a Britain ... which rewards the innovator and risk-taker and encourages a new generation of entrepreneurs, a Britain which because opportunity is open to all is enterprising and fair. (Gordon Brown, 2000)

The first step must be a new focus on empowering and enabling individuals, families and communities to take control of their lives so we create the avenues through which responsibility and opportunity can develop. This is especially vital in what is today the front line of the fight against poverty and inequality: education. (David Cameron, 2009)

The discourse of meritocracy has placed parents under immense pressure to ensure that their offspring succeed in “open competition”, so much so that in May 2010, the relationships counselling body, Relate, announced that it was offering guidance to families on how to cope with stress over their children’s GCSEs, A-levels and university finals (Asthana, 2010: 6). According to Philip Brown (2006: 394), parents’ anxiety over their children’s academic performance is due to the fact that we have entered ‘a zero-sum game’ where the winners take most, if not all, of the opportunities available in the free market. Parents’ anxiety over their children’s performance in this game is well-founded, given the scorn that is poured on “losers” by politicians supposedly overseeing equality of opportunity. For example, the ex-head of the CBI and former New Labour minister, Lord Digby Jones, is reported to have claimed that the government should ‘starve the jobless back to work’ and that anyone who refuses three job offers should be forced to ‘live in a hostel on subsistence rations’ (cited in Seymour, 2010: 59-60). Clearly this prospect is terrifying for parents, whose children are at significant risk of unemployment in the current recession, in spite of having secured the “economic passport” of credentials in our meritocracy.

3) You are worth what you can get

Neoliberal economic theory states that wages for different activities are the outcome of the impersonal market forces of supply and demand, and according to the marginal productivity theory of income distribution, ‘you’re worth what you

can get' (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 169). In spite of the political rhetoric of meritocracy, the evidence suggests that the relationship between individuals' earnings and their 'human capital', defined by Hill and Myatt (2010: 170) as the result of past investments in education and skill acquisition, is problematic:

Standard marginal productivity arguments suggest that top-level management receive amounts equal to what they add to the net profits of their company. Since their decisions have impacts on the productivity of many workers in the company, it might be possible to justify the huge rewards they earn. Empirically, however, there are no strong or consistent relationships between CEO pay and firm size, profitability or growth, neither across industries nor over time (Finkelstein and Hambrick 1988). This explains why many textbooks emphasise tournament theory. (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 190)

According to 'tournament theory', the salaries of top-level management are like tournament prizes that increase the productivity of everyone who strives for them: since a portion of everyone's income is sacrificed to go into the prize pool, the more contestants there are, the bigger the prize; the bigger the prize, the greater the incentive to win (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 190). However, a more likely explanation for the huge rewards earned today by top-level management is the use of stock options as part of executive remuneration; a practice introduced in the mid-1980s which resulted in a 'seismic shift' in executive pay in the USA from forty times the average wage in 1945 to 160 times the average wage in 2005 (a phenomenon mirrored in the UK) (Hill & Myatt, 2010: 192). According to Hill and Myatt (2010: 193), the problem with making management compensation dependent on stock price performance is that stock options, as currently given, focus only on *ends* and ignore *means*: for example, profits and stock prices may be driven up by reducing expenditure on R&D, which may enrich management but 'impoverish the company in the long run'; a phenomenon not generally acknowledged by neoliberal economists (Hill & Myatt, 2010).

The idea that 'you are worth what you can get' has entered English education via the celebration of credentials: within the marketplace of education, credentials are equivalent to executive remuneration, and are the 'tournament prize' pursued by pupils. The government has lent heavily on schools to ensure that all pupils take part in the 'tournament' and gain credentials: for example, in 2009, New Labour introduced the National Challenge programme, which was intended to help schools 'meet the 2011 goal that there should be no schools

where fewer than 30 per cent of pupils achieve at least five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics' (DCSF, 2009). The obsession with credentials has produced a similar effect to the use of stock options in executive remuneration, in that it has prompted schools to focus on ends (credentials) rather than means (the development of understanding). In 2008, the problem of 'teaching to the test' was officially recognised by a House of Commons Select Committee, which found that a 'variety of classroom practices aimed at improving test results had distorted the education of some children', and that teachers in both primary and secondary schools were impairing pupils' understanding and enjoyment of subjects by focussing on routine exercises and exam preparation (The Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2008: 3). Of course, teachers are not 'teaching to the test' through choice, since it is mandatory for schools to meet government-set targets for pupil performance, and the distortion of education identified by the Select Committee arguably has its origin in the National Curriculum, established by Thatcher in 1988, which recast teachers as administrators ('workers'), rather than decision makers ('business leaders') in the education marketplace. According to Furedi (2009), the disempowerment of teachers has led to a loss of confidence in the authority of adulthood and scholastic learning, and has made teachers less assertive and therefore more compliant with the standards agenda. In my study of the Church Road CP project (Chapter Nine) there was manifest uncertainty amongst teachers over the importance of bringing formal knowledge into lessons designed to support pupils' understanding of the CP project, and the thinness of the pupils' "street knowledge" prevented them from being able to explore the lessons' themes in any depth.

In an address to the College of Teachers in March 2009, Antony Seldon, master of Wellington College, stated: 'We have embraced dullness and so close are we to it, we do not even see what has happened' (Seldon, cited in Davies, 2009: 9). Seldon claimed that an admissions tutor at Oxford University had confessed that, 'We are not looking for broad-achieving and rounded students at this college. In fact, we are not rounded people ourselves', which suggests that uncertainty over the value of self-development through interaction with academic materials is not confined to primary and secondary schools, but has entered elite institutions of higher education. According to Seldon, 'soulless, loveless, desiccated education damages children for a lifetime', yet what better training is

there for adult life in a neoliberal culture, which denies the existence of society and celebrates the pursuit of self-interest? Robert Peston (2008: 193) has spoken out against the hedge-fund and private equity ‘brain drain’ of talented young people, who shun careers based upon academic study that might enrich all our lives, such as medicine and climate change research, and instead devote themselves to highly lucrative careers in finance, presumably because they subscribe to the belief that ‘you are worth what you can get’, rather than the belief that ‘some things are worth doing’. Peston quotes a leading hedge-fund manager:

I am an engineer by training. I moved out of engineering into the City in the mid-80s. I couldn’t believe that people would want to pay you that much money for creating nothing...The idea of having all the creative people in the financial markets is rather the tail wagging the dog. Having said that, it’s very good fun. (Anonymous, in Peston, 2009: 194)

It seems, then, that the mindlessness of post-88 performativity, discussed in Chapter Nine of this thesis, is not just an educational phenomenon: it is part of what Harvey (2010: 237) describes as a ‘sociological and intellectual malaise that hangs over knowledge production’; a malaise born of the dogma of utility, in which education is a passport to riches, rather than a journey of intellectual discovery, and individuals’ talents are not shared with humanity, but are instead squandered in the pursuit of self-interest.

4) The way forward

In attempting to understand Creative Partnerships, this thesis has arguably highlighted the lack of understanding on the part of individuals involved with CP about just how powerful this organisation might be as a corrective to the neoliberal ideas about education identified above. It is, of course, beyond the power of Creative Partnerships to abolish league tables, to put an end to the constant assessment of pupils’ performance, or to address structural constraints on social mobility. Yet individuals involved with CP may have a key role to play in counteracting the dogma that ‘you are worth what you can get’; in resisting the idea that the ‘body social’ is fictitious, and in questioning the idea that we should seek to gain a competitive advantage over one another in our ‘meritocracy’. Evidently, some individuals involved with CP *have* tried to resist post-88 performativity, as noted by Jones and Thomson (2008), and the painful experience

of the playwright discussed by Thomson *et al* (2006) and Hall *et al* (2007), reported in Chapter Six of this thesis, is an example of how hazardous it may be to openly challenge post-88 performativity in schools that are committed to the standards agenda, making such resistance admirable. Unfortunately, CP is subservient to the standards agenda (see Chapter Five), and creative practitioners' attempts to counteract the abandonment of imagination and understanding in the classroom have been hamstrung by CP's compliance with the "what works" protocol, as evidenced in the CP training sessions that I attended, where teachers and creative agents were told to focus on 'measurable outcomes', and to gather evidence to 'show the government that money is being well spent' (Chapter Nine). Consequently, creative practitioners are not just constrained by the ethos of schools in England: they are also constrained by the rationale of CP, and by and large the need to prevent arts-based education being made a servant of the Third Way has not been recognised by individuals involved with CP. The challenge, then, is for creative practitioners to re-image Creative Partnerships as a force of resistance to the neoliberal hegemony, and to re-articulate the value of arts-based education as something other than a means to gather credentials, support employability, and cultivate economic self-reliance.

Arguably, there is no form of education better suited to the task of counteracting neoliberalism than arts-based education, since recent advancements in our understanding of the human mind have revealed the arts to be profoundly linked with a sense of community, rather than individuality. In his study of the role of art in human cognition and cultural evolution, Per Aage Brandt (2006: 173) identified four phenomenological aspects of formal perception: *symbolization*, *construction*, *epiphany* and *disembodiment*. Of these, the moment of epiphany and disembodiment is particularly relevant to the development of community, and chime with the medieval notion of transcendentalism based on the abandonment of the self (see Chapter Two). According to Brandt (2006: 172), the arts cause a shift from pragmatic to formal perception that 'creates a transcendent, affective communal atmosphere, an intersubjective feeling of unity, intentionally oriented toward the shared unique instant in which the *epiphanic* presence of this meaning occurs', and he claims that the perceptual shift 'affects the "self" of performers and perceivers, momentarily creating a euphoric, even ecstatic, feeling of *disembodiment* or fading of the personal "I"'. In addition,

Brandt (2006: 174) states that ‘our minds are capable of attuning plastically to each other, attending jointly to a single event’ and can ‘hold “private” ideas and understandings and “public” (socially shared) conceptions at the same time’, and the evolution of this impressive faculty suggests that we are designed to be cooperative. It seems, then, that our mental architecture refutes Thatcher’s (1987) assertion that ‘There is no such thing as society’, and arts-based education may have a vital role to play in enabling pupils to gain the ‘ecstatic’ sense of disembodiment that occurs at the moment of interconnection. The potential of Creative Partnerships to offer pupils this experience is illustrated by Miles’ (2007) study of the Creative Campus (see Chapter Six). Here, troubled young people who had been excluded from mainstream education took part in drama activities that created a sense of inclusion and unity, and which enabled them to develop positive relationships with both their peers and the adults running the project, and this finding appears to support Richard Smith’s (2002) theory that self-esteem might be developed by looking looking outwards, rather than inwards. Unfortunately, the mock-interview that was tagged onto the drama activities undermined the experience of the ‘body social’ by drawing attention to the mismatch between the pupils’ “self” and the ideal self desired by employers, which indicates how easily the value of arts-based education as a means to foster a sense of community is compromised by neoliberal ideas about employability and the pursuit of self-interest.

Arts-based education that involves the mastery of a craft, such as calligraphy or batik printing, also reasserts the primacy of community, since according to Richard Sennett (2008: 288), ‘Good craftsmanship implies socialism’. Sennett’s claim is based, first, on the recognition of the ‘shared experiment, the collective trial and error’ that goes into the historical development of crafts, and, second, on the recognition that craftwork focuses on ‘objects in themselves and on impersonal practices’ and ‘turns the craftsman outward’ (Sennett, 2008: 288). There is an obvious overlap between Sennett’s ideas about craftwork and medieval asceticism (see Chapter Two), and the status of craftwork as a means of communion, rather than individualism, was also recognised by Dewey:

The development within the young of the attitudes and dispositions necessary to the continuous and progressive life of a society cannot take place by direct conveyance of beliefs, emotions and knowledge. It takes place through the intermediary of the environment...By doing his share in the associated activity, the individual appropriates the purpose which actuates it, becomes familiar with its methods and subject matters, acquires needed skill, and is saturated with its emotional spirit. (Dewey, 1916/1952: 26)

Something of this shared experience of activity was evident in the Church Road CP project (see Chapter Nine), where the pupils worked together to create a “Pod Hideaway”. An attempt was made to follow-up this group activity in the art lesson, where the pupils were told to make miniature versions of the Pod. However, it was not possible for the pupils to become saturated with what Dewey might describe as ‘the emotional spirit of Pod building’, since the Pod Hideaway was an instance of conceptual art, which is de-materialised and exists at the level of an idea, rather than an artefact (Schellekens, 2007), and the “spirit” of the Pod remained locked in the mind of creative practitioner who had devised this installation piece. As noted by Hensher (2010), it is difficult for the ideas that actuate conceptual art to “enter the mind” of the child, and although the enormous financial success enjoyed by conceptual artists, such as Damien Hirst, makes the sidelining of technical skill in arts-based education appear logical, the promotion of conceptual art via Creative Partnerships arguably denies the value of craftwork as a means to experience solidarity, and instead promotes the neoliberal theory that utility derives from the pursuit of self-interest.

Finally, arts-based education might be said to counteract neoliberalism by engaging pupils with culture, not by accumulating the ‘cultural capital’ that allows individuals to gain a competitive advantage over one another in the workplace, but through taking part in democratic, cultural interaction, as envisaged by Dewey. According to Dewey (1916/1952), children should not be “drilled in culture”, or “Hellenised” through instruction in what figures such as Arnold (1869) consider to be our nation’s cultural heritage: instead, they should develop a relationship with cultural artefacts based upon a recognition of the collective endeavour that underpins craftwork; an endeavour which engenders a feeling of connectivity, rather than individuality. Furedi (2009) notes that, in recent years, we have been wary of promoting “elite culture” on the grounds that it is socially divisive, and have misunderstood Dewey’s progressivism as a rejection of what

might be termed “highbrow” materials. Yet to shun the use of “elite culture” in arts-based activities in schools in deprived areas is to repeat the elite appropriation of culture that occurred during the Renaissance (see Chapter One), when the course of academic study originally designed to train boys from all walks of life for the priesthood was seized by the elite as the exclusive birthright of their sons, and the study of the classics was posited as a means to ‘rise in judgement above the common sort’ (Lupset, 1529/1956: 85). Of course, we are right to be wary of promoting the kind of cultural apartheid described by Bourdieu (1986), and the passive study of the arts does indeed risk perpetuating class distinctions based upon who has, and has not, taken his place on the ‘high hill of contemplation’ through erudition (Lupset, 1529/1956: 85). We are all, no doubt, familiar with the idea that the head of a corporation takes her clients to the opera, while her employees watch ‘The X Factor’ on television. However, the kind of education posited by Dewey makes fear of class division based on knowledge of the arts redundant: for the reasons discussed already, cultural artefacts cannot be appropriated by individuals when they are understood by pupils to be the product of ‘collective trial and error’ (Sennett, 2008: 288). Indeed, the understanding of the role of the collective, or ‘body social’, in art production is inherent in much of our cultural materials, including those that might be labelled as part of “elite culture”. For example, at the close of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Puck addresses the audience, saying, ‘So, good night unto you all’, and Shakespeare (c. 1595/2001) thereby invites the audience to acknowledge their presence at, and involvement with, the dramatic event. This technique is also used by Charlotte Brontë towards the end of her novel, *Jane Eyre*, when her heroine declares, ‘Reader, I married him’, and Brontë thereby places *us*, her readers, within the text (1847/1931: 498). Shakespeare’s Puck describes the *dramatis personae* as ‘shadows’ (act 5, sc. 2, l. 54), and all writing might be described as a refraction of our collective human experience. When Barthes (1967/2001) proclaimed the ‘Death of the Author’ he was, in effect, reasserting the communal nature of the arts that was denied by the rhetoric of individualism, spawned in the Renaissance and retold more latterly under neoliberalism; a communal nature that was recognised in ancient times, when the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus declared, ‘We are made for cooperation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the

rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another then is contrary to nature' (circa 161/1925: 97-8).

Arts-based education that attunes pupils to the craftwork underpinning cultural artefacts such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - its script, its costumes, its acting and so on - offers pupils something far more than 'cultural capital', or intellectual cachet. According to as the philosopher, Dennis Dutton:

The admiration of skill is not just intellectual; skill exercised by writers, carvers, dancers, potters, composers, painters, pianists, singers, etc. can cause jaws to drop, hair to stand up on the back of the neck, and eyes to flood with tears. The demonstration of skill is one of the most deeply moving and pleasurable aspects of art. (Dutton, 2009: 53)

Creative practitioners are able to bring pupils into contact with cultural materials, and to demonstrate skill based upon the knowledge of craft that is deeply affecting. However, as noted in Chapters Six and Nine, Creative Partnerships is preoccupied with the desire to cultivate the so-called transferable skills that enable pupils to gain employment, and to help raise pupils' academic scores so that they might succeed in our 'meritocracy', and the demonstration of skill has often been sidelined in favour of the arrangement of opportunities for pupils to draw upon their "street knowledge", which allegedly enables them to take ownership of creative activities and to develop a 'can-do attitude' (Sternberg, 1996: 20). The celebration of pupils' "street knowledge" *feels* democratic, but as noted by Jonathan Neelands and Boyun Choe (2010), the neoliberal mission to develop the individual as a self-efficacious, autonomous economic unit via arts-based education has inhibited the ability of the arts to engender a sense of democratic community:

In our view, the current English model of creativity places too much emphasis on an unconditional and egalitarian faith in human agency, which has become increasingly distanced from a pro-social creative consciousness, shaped by critical, ethical and moral reflections on the social, cultural and economic limits of human capacity. (Neelands & Choe, 2010: 300)

A pro-social consciousness might be developed through Creative Partnerships' projects, if only Creative Partnerships would throw off its yoke of servitude to neoliberal thinking. Following New Labour's election defeat in May 2010, Creative Partnerships found itself in the awkward position of needing to seek continuation of its funding from the Coalition government during a period of

profound economic difficulty. In what might be the last roll of the die for Creative Partnerships, the CCE commissioned a report by PricewaterhouseCoopers that highlighted the utility of the Creative Partnerships as a means to raise pupils' GCSE scores (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2010). The decision to promote Creative Partnerships as a vehicle for raising educational standards is understandable, in view of the neoliberal fascination with performance maximisation and the economic belt-tightening ushered in by the recession, which makes "touchy-feely" programmes seem a waste of our nation's dwindling resources, yet any attempt on the part of Creative Partnerships to make itself appear important by supporting the standards agenda risks jeopardising the value of the arts as a means to resist the very thinking that led to our current economic crisis, which was, after all, brought on by the bankers' reckless pursuit of self-interest.

In Chapter Five, it was noted that institutions such as Creative Partnerships play an important role in the establishment of power relations in society, but that the anchorage of power relations is ultimately found not within institutions but *outside*, in the plurality of discourse formations (Foucault, 1969/2009). At the point of concluding this thesis in 2010, it is apparent that the UK is experiencing economic and social turmoil as a result of the 2008 banking crisis, and in light of the blatant failure of neoliberal economic policy to prevent the bankers from "killing the goose that laid the golden egg", economists such as Joseph Stiglitz (2010) have called for a new paradigm of economics that recognises that people are not always rational, and that the free market model is not efficient. In attempting to understand Creative Partnerships, this thesis has shown that Creative Partnerships is bound up with dubious economic thinking, and while any shift in the discourse of economics may well prompt a re-conceptualisation of education, I would argue that it is within the power of creative practitioners and arts educators to make the first move; to re-tell the function of arts-based education and set in motion the process identified by Bettencourt *et al* (2008), whereby a new idea spreads like a virus. This infection occurred with regard to the rhetoric of creativity based on neoliberal individualism, and so too it may occur with regard to a new discourse of creativity, based upon the recognition of our ability to find pleasure, solace and wisdom by looking outwards, rather than inwards, by connecting with one another through the arts. Reflecting on the

spectacular collapse of the banks in 2008, the economists at the Royal Academy concluded that the financial crisis, born of the pursuit of self-interest, ‘was principally a failure of the collective imagination of many bright people, both in this country and internationally, to understand the risks to the system as a whole’ (Harvey, 2010: 235). In order to prevent another such calamity, our interdependence must be recognised, and celebrated.

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APPENDIX A

Creative Partnerships Timeline

- **1992** Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) founded in USA.
- **1995** Creative Arts Partnerships in Education UK Briefing Paper (Downing, 1995).
- **1997** Creative Arts Partnership in Education UK (CAPE UK) founded.
- **1997** New Labour elected under Tony Blair, ending 18 years of Conservative government.
- **1997** New Labour publishes its first White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*. Praises educational partnerships.
- **1998** New Labour reviews the National Curriculum.
- **1998** Baseline evaluation of CAPE UK (Ashworth et al, 1998) suggests that the word ‘arts’ in the programme title is ‘at odds with the whole curriculum focus intended by the UK initiative’ (Doherty & Harland, 2001:1). The word ‘arts’ is subsequently dropped, and the initiative is now described as ‘Creative Partnerships in Education’.
- **1999** National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) publishes *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*.
- **2001** New Labour wins general election.
- **2001** New Labour publishes *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years* (DCMS, 2005). Unveils plans for Creative Partnerships.

- **2002** Creative Partnerships launched by Tessa Jowell, Culture Secretary.
- **2005** New Labour wins general election; Blair's third consecutive victory.
- **2006** Arts Council England publishes its report on Creative Partnerships, *The rhetorics of creativity: a review of the literature* (Banaji et al, 2006).
- **2006** UNESCO 1st World Conference on Arts Education, 'Building Creative Competencies for the 21st Century'.
- **2007** The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) are replaced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF); the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR).
- **2007** Tony Blair resigns as Prime Minister, and is replaced by Gordon Brown.
- **2008** Arts Council England announces that, from April 1st 2009, Creative Partnerships will be run through a new independent organisation, Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE), based in Newcastle upon Tyne.
- **2009 – 2011** CCE given a grant of £75 million from Arts Council England to run two national initiatives: Creative Partnerships and Find Your Talent.
- **2010** General election produces hung parliament. Conservatives and Liberal Democrats form a coalition government. David Cameron becomes Prime Minister.
- **2010** CCE publishes *Creativity, Culture & Education: the costs and benefits of Creative Partnerships*.

Appendix B

BBC NEWS



You are in: Entertainment: **Arts**

Thursday, 21 March, 2002, 14:53 GMT

Arts can cut crime, says Jowell

Youth crime has been making headlines
More arts and sport projects will be used to help cut juvenile crime, Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell has announced.

She told a conference on Arts and Young Offenders at London's Tate Modern gallery that music workshops, Shakespeare performances and dance classes can give young people an alternative to burglary, vandalism and violence.

The crime rate has fallen in areas where young people are involved in projects to get them off the streets and engaged in creative pursuits, she said.

The speech came as newspaper front pages are filled with stories of young criminals, including an 11-year-old Bristol girl who was caught on camera smashing her way into a shop.

Ms Jowell said the reasons young people turn to crime include having "no role models, no self respect, no self discipline, and nothing better to do".

"Surely the answer is staring us in the face," she said.

'Take responsibility'

"Engaging them in sport or the arts gives them all the tools they need to make a success of their lives and keep them off crime."

"The arts and sport can encourage young offenders to make choices, decisions and personal statements, to have enthusiasm, to take risks and take responsibility."

One example was seen last week, when Labour MP David Lammy invited singer Alicia Keys to meet schoolchildren from his Tottenham constituency because he said she was a good role model.

Ms Jowell was launching Creative Partnerships, 16 schemes to let young people work with those involved in culture and the arts in areas of "social and cultural deprivation".

Crime rates

The crime rate in areas where the Youth Justice Board staged similar projects in summer 2000 fell by 6% compared with a national rise of 3.8%, she said.

Criminal damage was down by 14% and domestic burglary by 27%, she added.

She has also told the people who distribute lottery money to consider the needs of young people.

She pointed to a Shakespearean company that stages workshops in young offenders' institutions, and a Billy Elliot-style ballet project in one of the most deprived areas of Bristol as schemes already in place.

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